OTHER WORLDS

NOVEMBER
1952
35¢

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The People Who Make OTHER WORLDS

No. 7. W. E. Terry

THE name is Bill Terry. The statistics: Born December 11, 1921, in Galesburg, Illinois; now residing in Chicago; unmarried (refuse to use chlorophyll in my pipe tobacco and cigars); hobbies include most sports, golf in particular. Educated at Colorado College, plus a few special courses after the war. In addition to the conventional college courses, sports and other curricula, I received some sound basic drawing instruction at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. College was interrupted in deference to the Marine Corps, from which I emerged with a damaged left wing—souvenir of Okinawa.

After some hospital time came college completion. Then with trembling knees, I started job hunting in the precarious illustrative field. Ziff-Davis Publishing Company acquired me as an apprentice, and about the time the future looked pretty dim Ray Palmer okayed my first science-fiction illustration—a welcome encouragement from a great guy.

I started free-lance work about the time Mr. Palmer started OTHER WORLDS, and since then it's been a happy situation—doing illustrations for OW and for another science-fiction publication familiar to many of you, Bill Hamling's IMAGINATION.

Although my work includes text book and fiction novel illustrating, westerns, a couple of comic strips and some commercial and advertising work, doing science-fiction illustrations is the job I really look forward to. This type of work affords greater freedom of imagination and expression; in fact, the editors are very cooperative in that respect by actually encouraging the artist to use his own interpretation of a given situation. This, as you can imagine, is very gratifying to an artist, and is one of the main reasons I'm always happy to get an assignment for OTHER WORLDS from Ray Palmer.

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NOVEMBER
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Back Cover:
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Editorial

YOU readers can put this editor down for a goldarn liar! If you read the last two editorials (August and October) then you must be plenty confused. Because just how many lies we told in it is something we shudder to think of. To enumerate a few: first we said we'd go monthly with the *September* issue, then we turned up and didn't have a September issue; next, we said the August issue would be on sale June 20—actually it got on sale about July 15. How's that for being late? There were more lies. We said we'd start Byrne's new *serial* in the September issue, and it ran *complete* in the October issue. Who's confused? Yeah, you're right—me!

Let's just forget the past, hey? We'll go nuts trying to understand it. Anyway, from now on we HAVE got it straight. OTHER WORLDS is on a monthly schedule, and this November issue is the second of the monthly issues. We will appear on sale each month somewhere between the first and the fourth day of the month. You can pretty well depend on that. If your dealer hasn't got OW by the fourth day of each month, simply smash all his windows in, because he's being unfair to OW! Imagine hiding it under the counter just because it has such nice back covers!

Say, how do you like OW now? That grade of paper you been asking for; back covers with *real* class to them; no darn type cluttering them up so you can't frame them for either your parlor or your crescent-palace; a new layout for the front cover (not quite a direct steal from *Galaxy, Astounding Science Fiction,* and *Imagination.*) It's just that we *had* to put it that way, to make the front covers come out so you can frame them. When we do something, our reason is *you,* not some other magazine. So, we beg our rivals' pardon if we've imitated them. It's just that the idea of stretching the title out across the top is a natural for *our* purpose. Only difference is, that if occasion demands, we may have a varied style of layout on our covers, due to certain paintings just not fitting any existing layout. Might be you'd find the title of the magazine smack across the middle of the cover (now Bea, don't throw that ledger—remember what happened to the last one!).

Our covers this month need some explaining. First, the front cover was one of Bob Jones' "accidents" and we really did intend to run it as a back cover, but it was so pretty, and violated so many editorial taboos (such as no big figures, all cluttered up with little stuff, rampant with color without any dominating color, etc., etc.)

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that we figured it was a natural for the *front* cover. We like to do business that way. Just shove up a taboo and we'll boo at it! Besides, the cover illustrates THE SCARPEIN OF DELTA SIRA by G. H. Irwin so well. Next, the back cover is a painting by J. Allen St. John featuring the legendary Circe. We make no apologies for this one. We blatantly say that this is the most terrific art ever seen on a science fiction magazine. We say St. John has painted a masterpiece. We say it is a smash! We say we expect a virtual mob scene at the convention (this is being written before it comes off, remember) when the auction bidding begins. May we make a prediction? Either Doc Barrett or Forrie Ackerman will get it! Now Barrett, was that nice to mortgage your home just to get a St. John original? (Don't forget Darrell C. Richardson, Rap — he can't resist bidding on a St. John, either, Bea).

But guys and gals, more St. John is coming up on the back covers. And Bok (only he doesn't release his originals to us). But each and every one of these will be reproduced so you can frame 'em. We have such a varied program underway for the back covers that we think you'll haunt the newsstands just to see what the next one will be.

Enough of talking about our magazine—we've got to write an editorial. Which brings us to a mystery. My mail brings in so many letters saying I write wonderful editorials that I am becoming suspicious. When I reread some of the turkeys I've foisted on you in the past, I wonder if maybe this isn't some game being played by a couple of fans. Okay, I fell for it. I am bloated with ego. I am so bloated that I will try to do better in the future. Which should be easy . . .

But before we get onto politics, or something, have you noticed that Bea Mahaffey is now co-editor of this magazine? She would have been in the October issue, only she went and changed it behind my back. You see, all these here improvements are because she just won't let well enough alone. She insists that I work harder —and I *detest* hard work. Why, she even tossed a whole bundle of manuscripts in my lap, and said either I'd have to re-write them so they were acceptable to our readers, or junk them. Well, the temptation to junk them was very great, but the money involved was also very great—so we sat down, groaned, grumbled, and re-wrote. Yeah, you guessed, it — Shaver! But here's a secret Bea doesn't know—yet! I've always had to rewrite Shaver, if for nothing else than to take out some of the sex. Then came the day! I FORGOT to edit a Shaver manuscript, and Kraft-Ebbing got blamed for still more things (says Paul Fairman, former editor of IF, and now on the staff of the new FANTASTIC.). From this, Shaver got the idea it was okay, and brother, did he pile it on. I've still got a bedroom scene I yanked out of *Daughter of the Night* which is 58 pages long. So you see, Bea has a big voice in the magazine and it's only right

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The

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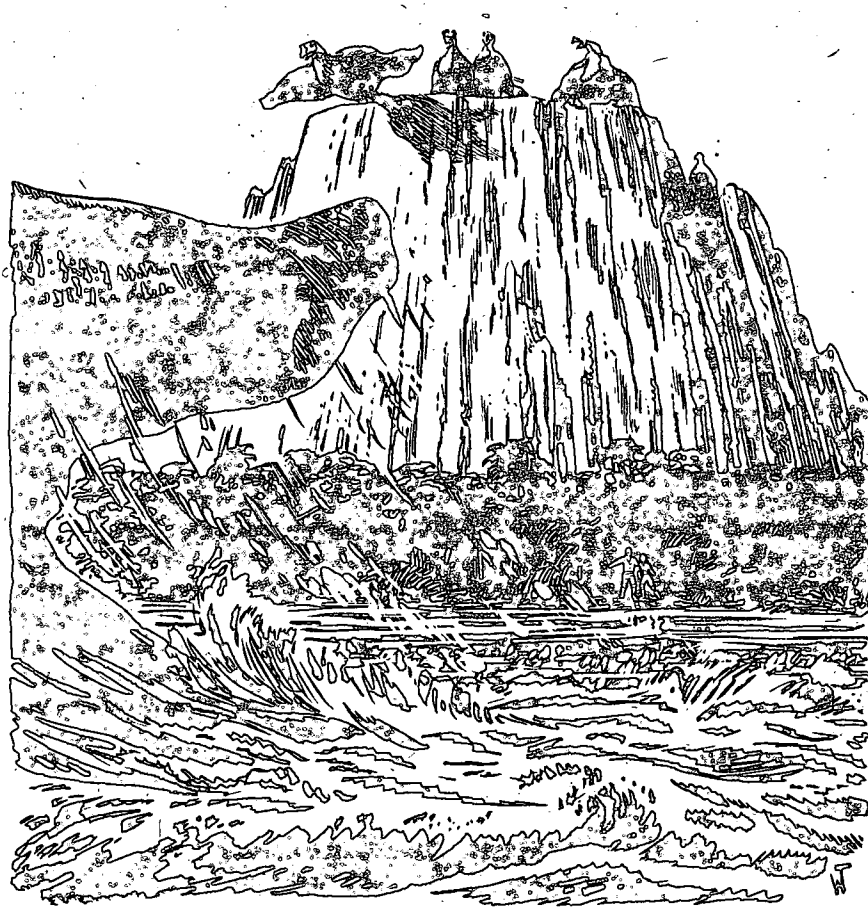
SCARPEIN of DELTA SIRA

By

G. H. Irwin



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OUTSIDE the tree house the fern trees whispered softly, a background music against which the bark of an occasional *poochie* or the scream of a *hory* bird over the river were staccato and not unpleasing contrast.

Inside, amid the most sybaritic setting on all Venus, Frank Farar lolled upon a white leather divan, a present from an admiring webfoot chief to "Fe 'dain" (Webfoot for "The Hunter"). A discontented impatience with the very ease and perfection of his surroundings pulled his lean, clean-jawed face into unpleasant lines.

Alinoa, his green translucent-fleshed Fenir-dren wife, sat cross-legged at his feet, studying a spool of metal ribbon running through a weird looking little machine the metal exterior of which was green with an age of corrosion. She was listening to the purely mental vibrations, audible only to one trained in listening to *yarva* talk, the telepathic method of communication on Venus.

"Listen to this, Frank! It is telling of the Scarpein of Delta Sira! Remember I told you of this monster, and you said: 'Seeing's believing, and you *can't* show me a creature that exists only on a forgotten star world.' The Scarpein was the most terrific fighter to be found on any world in the skies. . . ."

Farar straightened. His face lost the look of unpleasant introspection. His own *yarva* sense, developed from a childhood among the webfoots, was nearly as sensitive as Alinoa's. The ancient device, relic of the far past when the glass-bodied Fenir-dren were the mightiest race of Venus, and called "children of the stars" because they had come to Venus from distant worlds, went on with its account of their beginnings long ago on Delta Sira (the planet Sira of the Delta star-group).

It was a story of a time of fierce primal life rampant on a new-born world; a tale of a world of vast forests, of great cliffs above wide rivers. In the cliffs lived a feared kind of winged monster, huge in size, that swooped down upon anything that moved along the rivers. The monster, called "The Scarpein" had rows of single-clawed hooks, like a multitude of fingers ranged along its wing flaps, by which it hung motionless and invisible among the towering rocks of the cliffs, for it was of the same color as the red and yellow rocks of the cliffs. It slept thus, upside down like a bat, but it was no bat. It was more like the great ray of Earth. Huger by far, weighty like a killer-whale, its dive was irresistible to all living things. It was a great flying wing, the leading edge of the center one great mouth and the rest hooked and terrible wings which it wrapped about its victims. Few indeed were released from that embrace before death.

Watching Farar, I saw the demon gleam in his eyes, knew he was thinking of getting this legendary Scarpein monster beneath the sights of his rifle. But the idea was ridiculous, for Alinoa was playing a record made by

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her people in an ancient time, and that world and that place where the flying monster hung above the rivers was a place lost to the knowledge of men, upon a distant and forgotten world among stars unknown in the present day. True, the ancient Fenir-dren had voyaged to Earth in flight from that same world, and they had not spoken in their records of the thing that had driven them into flight; but men of today had not yet voyaged beyond the solar system.

The Fenir-dren had made that voyage a long time ago. Called the "Glass-people" by the web-footed batrachian-odored amphibious natives of Venus, they were both revered and feared. Their translucent green bodies were the most beautiful of the several races of the planet, but they kept to themselves in their jungle-hidden ruined cities, few in number and growing fewer as the years passed. Unlike the common Greenie webfoot, they had preserved almost intact their records of the ancient times when their forebears spanned space, before the time of the great comet.

Farar's wife Alinoa was the very first of the Fenir-dren to leave their jungle fastnesses and become a part of the Earthmen's life on Venus. Looked up to as *kali-can,* or magic-woman, by the Greenies, she and Farar practically ruled the webfoot race from their luxurious tree-home. The rest of the Earth people remained safely within their plastic domes, fearing Venus and her mysterious perils, and left the webfoot and such renegades as Farar severely alone. That is, until they needed someone who could traverse the rivers and swamps and come back alive.

Alinoa made a habit of reviewing all her store of ancient records frequently, for she belonged to the caste among her people whose duty was to preserve the memory of their great past. It was a rich lore, and Farar made full use of his access to her strange knowledge from the distant worlds of her ancestors. Much of it, however, was in the form of tales or bits of pictures, descriptions of some unusual or feared thing, and the words needed to understand fully were words forgotten, no longer among the Fenir-dren spoken tongue. Thus, they knew that *"Sira"* was once the home of her people. They knew the Scarpein lived on Sira "in the Delta." But they did not know what star group was called "the Delta" nor because of what danger they had fled that world.

Fascinated by the vivid description of the Scarpein, Farar played the ancient spool over and over, puzzling the while over the non-understandable fragments, for the records gave off a vibration which caused direct mental pictures to form in the mind of the hearer, but they had also a picture-code of explanation, much of which was lost. This Frank knew, and often tried to puzzle out the ancient code. A "dog" impression might actually mean a kind of wolf, and "wolf" was the mental symbol for danger. He wondered if the Scarpein, so overwhelming a killer, might

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not simply be a symbol for an undefeatable invader.

Watching Farar, irritated at last by his silence, I got up and made my way back to my own home in the mining compound. If I could have realized where Farar's thought was leading him, I would have attempted to distract him. But I had no inkling. When it matured, it was, as usual with Frank, a mental landslide.

WEEKS later, I was hard at work on the mine books, checking accounts, when Farar ambled in. He had donned a somewhat worn leather outfit, one of several made for him by the admiring Greenies. It was resplendently savage in beadwork and green leather fringe, with the effect topped by a small blue and red feather plume in his lank black hair. I eyed the feather and grinned, recognizing the handiwork of Alinoa, whose tastes were completely those of her barbaric people.

Farar took down one of his rifles from the wall-rack, and seating himself, began to take it apart. His things littered the mine office, and few of them had anything to do with mine business. I still kept my silence, for between us words were seldom necessary, and I could see his mind was busy with some problem of his own. As for Farar, his habit of using *yarva* talk with the natives had made the common small talk need of ordinary Earthmen non-existent for him. He was usually silent.

The scratch of the old fashioned stub-pen was the only sound, aside from the distant rumble of the pumps in the mine head, or the thump and jar of an ore cart on the loading rails. Farar broke the silence.

"Look here, Hal, I'm going after the Scarpein."

I swiveled noisily in the old office chair, looking at Frank for a long minute, trying to make out the joke. Then I grunted scornfully, swung the chair back to my work.

Farar went on: "Make your objections, Worran, and I'll tell you why they're not obstacles."

I put down the pen, leaned back in the swivel chair, lifted my feet up to the battered desk top. "You mean that dreamland monster Alinoa was telling you about? Remember, I don't know much about it—I hear the records but dimly. But I gathered the ungodly thing was on some far planet. Earth hasn't built a ship that will get beyond our own solar system, yet! Besides, if you *could* go after it, there wouldn't be any sense in the trip. What do you want with the hide of a beast as big as your own roof?"

Frank pulled the breech out of the rifle, squinted up the barrel. It was full of dust, and he began to joint a ramrod and insert an oil cloth. He gave me one enigmatic grin and no more.

I grunted again, trying to put together my shattered peace of mind and get back to the bookkeeping. My partner left all the mine work to me, took his share of the profits without comment or argument. Anything to avoid paper-work was his

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motto. He was strictly a Greenie in his way of thinking. I tried one more prod to get at his meaning.

"Objections, you want? I can give you a dozen! It doesn't even make sense. It is on a planet indistinguishable from a trillion others. Alinoa can't translate her ancestral records closely enough to tell you where it used to be. If she could, it wouldn't be there today, for stars move, and that was thousands of years ago. To finish the crazy idea, if you really are screwy enough in your webfooted wool-headed contrariness to entertain such a plan, mankind has not yet conquered the stars and most probably never will. There exists today no space ship capable of going beyond Neptune in one man's lifetime. Lastly—and to you, least—I need you around here to keep the Greenies working."

Farar finished oiling the old gun, polished the outside. A good fifteen minutes went by while he was lost in the contemplation of inner vistas closed to me. With a *yarva* telepath, such silences were to be expected, as they formed the habit of assuming a friend could listen in if he chose. But I had no *yarva* faculty. If it could be acquired, I had never learned how. I waited patiently until this fact suggested itself to Farar. At last he stood up, took a bit of paper from the leather pouch at his belt. He handed it to me, and with the other hand put his rifle back on its rack on the wall and took down the new explosive bullet auto-rifle he had received from earth on the last freight rocket, a month before.

Curbing my irritation, I unfolded the paper. It was a clipping from a sheet called *Venusian Colonist,* printed in London by men who never saw Venus, but which contained all the news from Earth that might conceivably interest Venusians. The heading ran: "First Interstellar Voyage Successfully Completed," and I started; gave Frank a quick glance which told me nothing but that he was engrossed in his new rifle. I read on. "Recently returned from a voyage that up to now has been shrouded in complete secrecy, the International Atomic Corporation's ship *Voidspanner* docked at Newhaven rocket yards yesterday. The crew of technical specialists have brought back specimens of living things from several planets at which they touched. Rumor is rife that the voyage was touched with tragedy in the loss of several members of the expedition. The details of the discoveries are yet to be released. But it is definitely known that man has conquered the stars! Watch this space for future revelations by the technicians, findings from beyond the limit of the sun's light!"

Farar took the clipping, which I handed him silently, folded it, tucked it in his pouch. His eyes were on mine with an almost terrifying gleam, a hypnotic look that caused tingles of anticipation to run up and down my spine. My fingers began to tremble. I stood up suddenly, upsetting the old swivel chair.

But Farar was talking now, his

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eyes again on the mechanism of the new gun as he carefully disassembled it. "I've had that clip two months, Hal. I sent to a detective agency on Earth to look up the rest of the details of that voyage and of that ship. I gave them *carte blanche* on money to go ahead, even to buying the ship if possible, though I didn't expect they could. It took most of my money, and that wasn't hay. It's gone, but I got results."

Farar let his eyes rove back to me, amused at my ruffled hair and the flush of excitement I knew was staining my face. I put my hands on the desk, to support my weight, suddenly become too great.

"My God, Frank, are you trying to tell me such a ship can be bought for only money? It doesn't seem possible!"

Frank shrugged. "Anything is possible if you have enough money, Hal. I had enough, just enough. I'm broke right now, but I don't even miss it. It cost me twenty million English pounds, Hal. They'd really a monopoly, because no one but IAC could even begin to build a ship like it. There are only two others like it being built; but in a few years the stars will be but stops on the space lines. The boom is on, but we're in, ahead of it."

I had only admiration for this partner of mine. "Why, you must have outbid a couple of governments to get one. I don't see . . ."

Farar grinned. "Well, there were a couple of angles to it. I happen to know something about the President of IAC. He was here on Venus a few years ago. I guided a party of big shots from Earth on a hunting trip. One of the party was accidentally shot. You know, the usual hunting trip kind of killing. Only I happened to see it, and ever since the affair, Ancil, the president, has considered me as a personal benefactor. It wasn't any of my business if they came all the way to Venus to kill each other. But, of course, when he learned it was me trying to buy a ship, I figure he thought I might be blackmailing him. Anyway, it wasn't the same as if I didn't know him. One reason the affair worried him was that the victim was IAC's biggest stockholder."

I was a little scandalized by Farar's bland expression of delight in what sounded like murder and blackmail to me. "You mean you winked at a murder, and now it's paying off?"

Farar grinned at my naive flush of sudden morality. "I liked Ancil. I did not like Drew, the man he killed. So far as I was concerned, Ancil thought Drew was a scaled deer when he shot him. Only Drew was wearing a red coat, and the scaled deer is gray. But Drew was an irritating individual with superior airs, very conscious of his wealth and the inferiority of less fortunate men. I felt like killing him myself occasionally. Ancil really did it. I applauded him mentally, pretended not to notice. But it was really involuntary manslaughter, brought on by a case of aggravated ego. On Drew's part, you understand."

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I jerked myself back from the contemplation of murder with "Never mind it. It's a bagatelle to you. Now you rip loose the whole fabric of my life with this star ship. How in Hell can I plan ahead when you keep pulling these surprises?"

The amusement in my partner's eyes as he contemplated the revolution in our affairs made me swear.

God damn it, Frank, you do these things so sudden! Now you're broke, but you've got one of the few interstellar ships in existence. Now what do you want, me to buy you out for cash to finance the expedition? How are you going to finance this hunting trip for a legendary creature that has probably been extinct since Noah built the ark? Or hadn't you thought of that?"

Farar kept right on grinning, watching me try to assimilate the change in him from my mine manager to a star rover—or was the change in myself? Mildly he explained: "Alinoa's tribe became very interested when she told them. That was a week ago. Yesterday a boat load of tribal gems, some long-treasured hoard of her tribe, turned in this branch of the river, along with a half-dozen young Fenir-dren braves all painted up for the star trail. So I've got a crew already, as well as funds enough for a dozen trips."

I fumed. "Everybody on Venus knows you bought a star ship a week before you even tell me about it, eh? Someday I'll get mad and knock that grin of yours right down your skinny neck! How do you expect to operate a ship like that with feathered Indians from the Fenir-dren hide-out? They wouldn't know an atomic jet from a fountain of ink? You've got to hire the very best rocket men available, and then you've got to buy them a small library of technical information from the builders of the ship and let them study for about a year before they can begin to think about taking off! Not to mention the problem of navigation beyond the solar system. And that's a problem no one knows anything about, most especially our astronomers! Every solar system voyage has proved some pet astronomical theory totally false, so far. What will the interstellar voyages prove, but that astronomers don't know anything? The most false of all their fabric of precise calculation of bodies in space has been their estimation of distances. Actual voyages have proven them ninety per cent wrong! How are you going to navigate with that kind of data to go on?"

Farar put a gentle hand of remonstrance on my shoulder, still grinning with delight at my justifiable anger. "I meant only the best by you, Hal. I didn't want to get you all steamed up before the idea was a fact. Now I'm ready to tell you. It's a fact! We can go, If you want to go along. If you want to stay here, I'm going anyway."

As he ambled lankily toward the doorway, he tossed over his shoulder: "Stay in that swivel chair and get pot-gutted, richboy, if you want. I'm not turning into a *patooton* just yet.

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(A patooton is Greenie for a kind of stinking tree fungus. Literally, the word means "little life that sits and stinks.")

Alone, I sat staring at the rows of figures in the ledger, rows which meant wealth, and suddenly I hated the whole business of amassing wealth from the mine Farar and I had discovered on a hill in the depths of a swamp. "Let the hired help run the damn mine!" I muttered to myself, and absently reached up to the gun rack and took down my own ancient Garand, a restocked sporting job I had bought from a gunsmith on a trip to Earth. My eyes were burning, and my upset thoughts were a wild turmoil of speculation. The vista's of unknown exotic worlds enchanted me while the practical problems of such a voyage into the unknown horrified me with their ultimate complexity. I began to clean the old gun, and suddenly realizing what my hands were doing, I knew I was going for sure.

The most enjoyable periods of my life have been those I spent with Frank Farar in a dugout on Venus' great misty rivers, exploring the little known Venusian wilderness. Now, Frank was offering the star-worlds, and I knew I could never build up the resistance necessary to refuse the opportunity. My eyes were wet as I muttered: "God help Janey and the kids, I'm going!"

OF course, Janey, my wife, who had been raised by the little Bunae of the swamplands, had already *yarva'd* the whole story out of Alinoa. In fact, they'd been busily planning back and forth from compound to tree house for over a week, while I hadn't even been told. Naturally, they both expected to go too!

That same night Alinoa and Frank came over, and Janey broke out the gold-berry wine she reserved only for special occasions. The four of us sat sipping the heavenly stuff, waiting for me to ask what the other three were thinking about. It was an abominable situation for me, living with three telepaths who were in contact with the rest of Venus, the native Venus, almost constantly. I never could quite catch up on the gossip or the important news, and they frequently forgot to tell me even vital points affecting myself. So I was eternally irritated by being left in the dark. Now, this latest affront—they had all already decided to leave for the star trip over a week before—rankled in my brain.

Patiently I queried: "Janey, I thought you would stay here with the kids; We can't take children into the peril of such a voyage. There's no knowing what we might run into. It's more than probable we'll never return. Who's going to raise our kids if we aren't around?"

Frank lit his pipe. He and Alinoa hadn't any children yet to complicate things, but since we had sent our two school age children off to Earth to get an education; and since our money provided governesses, tutors, servants; and since we had already set up trust funds for them just in

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case . . . he knew it was a pretext of mine to get at her plans. Janey snapped me off.

"New worlds, untouched by the vandal hand of man! Remember the Swamp of Despair where you found me! Look at it now, with the mine dumps all over the landscape! Venus was once all the universe to me. That was when I had never been out of the swamp. But now! Well, over my dead body you go without me!"

Frank lit his pipe, grinning at me, while Alinoa frowned at the smell of it, her green nose wrinkling as she moved herself away. Frank pointed with the worn stem. "No more peace and contentment, Worran. No more sitting back and watching the shekels pile up in your bank accounts. Fate is approaching up your front walk!"

I swung my head the way Frank's pipe pointed, saw a gray-suited burly figure coming up the walk from the paving that ran through the mine-dome from side to side. Behind him were three big webfoot natives carrying assorted leather valises. Beyond, where the big air-lock kept out the Venusian pests (pests which never seemed to bother natives) was a pile of similar luggage, deposited there by the air-taxi from the rocket port.

I swore under my breath, knowing that the others had *yarva'd* the man's identity the instant he hove into sight. "Who is it? Don't sit there looking so superior. Tell me!"

Frank complied tersely: "It's Ancil; the man I bought the ship from. This is going to be interesting."

Janey gave me a look. "He wants to go along, of all people. Why does he have to ask us, when he builds the ships?"

I nodded to the waiting Greenie maid, standing with her big web feet grotesquely askew, waiting with her beautiful eyes quizzically mocking me, for she already knew who it was, and that I would let him in. She opened the door and gave him a formal *dren* bow, clear to the floor. Which told me she classed the stranger far above the common run of mankind, whom she ordinarily greeted with only a simple curtsy.

Ancil came in, leaving his bags and the Greenie porters at the door. He greeted Frank with a hearty handshake, was introduced around, took a chair. Frank asked, as if he hadn't already extracted the information from the man's mind, "I'd like to hear how a man like you can steal time for a vacation when his company, one of the biggest in the world, is all tied up with interstellar shipbuilding contracts, the hottest boom in the history of space craft?"

Ancil had a ruddy, cheerful face, crowned with an almost white thatch. Sleekly tailored, he exuded a kind of relief, as if he had just shaken a great burden from his shoulders. "I never forgot that hunting trip with you, Frank. Been bragging about it for years; not the incident that darkened it, but the fact of knowing you. That's the real reason you got the first ship off the lines. If anyone is able to take care of themselves on an unknown, unexplored, possibly deadly planet, it's Frank Farar. I

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hoped I might be able to persuade you to let me go along, and I was tempted to make that a condition of sale. But I resisted, faked up a back-dated agreement to show the directors, giving you first chance to buy. You see, you do not realize that I was one of the passengers on the experimental voyage. I brought you a transcript of the log, and all the technical data I could lay hands on from the mass of such papers the technicians have been mulling over ever since. And Frank, between you and I, I never want to make a trip like that again. We were lucky to get back, let alone discover anything! Those numbskulls! I could sit here all night telling you of the boners they pulled, that even I could have avoided. But I was only a kind of observer, not an officer, and I could give no orders."

I was hesitating between distrust and liking for the big, elderly financier, a little angry at what I felt was going to prove the intrusion of an unwanted personality into our expedition into space. I sat silent, watching the stranger, waiting to get the full implication of his presence. Ancil bubbled with enthusiasm, while Frank seemed to regard him with positive and complete welcome. It came to me that here was special experience, a man with access to complete technical records of the difficulties of the projected trip. The impossible aspects melted away before my inner eye. Ancil should know we were not attempting the impossible, if he wanted to accompany us. Still, there was something fishy about a man as prominent and wealthy as this one choosing the obscure Worran and Farar Mining Corporation for a thing that could prove so important to his future. I wondered if I smelled a rat, or if it was my brain blowing a fuse. I said nothing, waiting.

Farar's eyes twinkled in secret humor at something he had drawn from Ancil's overexcited mind. He asked politely: "But your company, IAC? You can't walk off and leave them flat!"

Ancil flared with a kind of anger. "Can't I? I did! I resigned, fed up, through! Red tape, office work, secretaries with reams of papers to sign, phones ringing, conferences, publicity meetings, the U. N. officials on our tail for all kinds of fancied infringement of regulations, functions to attend, parties I couldn't avoid, rigaramarole and whatnot! I was going mad! A man has to protect his sanity, even if it costs him. I'd rather have the honor of backing Fe'dain in a shot at the star worlds, believe me, than a tombstone with fine sounding epitaph, or a padded cell in a nice private sanitarium."

Farar grinned amiably, his calm balance contrasting sharply with Ancil's obviously nervous condition. "We don't really need money, Harry. We do need your know-how, and what you learned on the first trip could prove vital. But I've signed up two rocketmen, and about the only position on the ship not filled already is cook. Can you cook?"

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Ancil started, grunted. "Unh? Cook, me? Well, you know, Frank, if you're trying to turn me down, you don't have to be roundabout. Just say yes or no; I can take it. But I really don't believe I'd be anything but useful to you."

Janey giggled, knowing Frank was ribbing the illustrious industrialist, one of the larger potentates of Earth in fact. Frank went on: I hired Hendryks and Holderness—you may have heard of them. One of them was fired by IAC not long ago for sounding off to some of your high-hat officials because he was left out of the experimental trip. Are you sure you know enough about your ship to make yourself useful on board?"

Ancil stood up, rubbing his hands. Apparently unable to sit still, he strode back and forth. "Good, good, I know both their records. I brought letters to you from three other men, men I know, the only men who kept their heads on the experimental voyage. They are fine rocket men, experienced, with years of service in the field. Two of them have recently acquired degrees in atomics, as well as taking courses in astral navigation, expecting this opportunity to crop up and getting ready for it. I know them, recommend them. Two of them served on the Mars run before they went to work for IAC. After our return, I mentioned you were trying to buy a ship, and the four of us got our heads together, figured out how to get you your ship. So you owe them a place, if only because they helped. They gave me the letters, wanted me to use my influence with you. You see, Frank, you don't quite realize what you mean to Earth people. Your reputation among adventure-minded men is not to be topped. You were written up scores of times in our sport magazines, and mention of you occurs every time hunting men get together. I've always bragged about knowing you. In club conversations, a man likes to say he knows some great sporting figure, and you are the most famous of modern big game hunters. Really the last of Earth's great sporting figures, you might say, because there are no more wild animals of any size left to hunt on Earth, and since the colonization of Venus petered out, and men proved they didn't like Venus, you are the one real hunter on either planet they know about. How many other Earthmen on Venus ever venture into the Venusian wilderness? Reason is, Frank, Earthmen have lost the outdoor knack; we aren't raised that way. We grow up on city streets, in villages, on mechanized farms. We aren't pioneers any more. You're just about the only one of your kind left."

There was a sincerity in the man that I could not help but accept. I myself hadn't fully realized Frank's unique gifts, product of his wild environment, raised among the savage Greenies. I caught Frank's eye, and nodded, just in case he was hesitating on my account.

Frank lowered an eyelid, proceeded to needle the financier: "Well, I'd

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like to say you were accepted already, but the real bosses around here are my wife, Alinoa, and Mrs. Worran. They might have some objections, you know how women are. I'd sure be sorry to have them turn down the former President of the IAC, the very man who made it possible for me to get a ship. But we've already signed up a crew. Alinoa's tribe has sent half a dozen warriors who are experts with the deadly Venusian needle guns, and we hardly need any more rifle-men. We might sign you on as deck hand, but there wouldn't be any work for you to do. We're taking several Greenies for the heavy work —they're the strongest men available on the two worlds. I can't quite fit your capacities into my idea of what's required. . ."

Ancil reddened, sat down, crossed his legs, coughed, uncrossed his legs, smoothed his hair, looked at the solemn, beautiful and nearly naked Alinoa, flushed a deeper red. Suddenly he caught on and burst into laughter. "We'll leave your decision for later, Frank. Shall I cable those three men to catch the next rocket or not?"

Janey, not to be outdone in insulting their new friend, asked mildly: "Can't you cook, Mr. Ancil? I am planning on *not* being appointed galley slave for the trip; the position is still open."

"If I have to cook to get on the ship, I'll cook, Mrs. Worran. On our trip in the *Voidspanner*, we had only engineers, nuclear physics experts, botanists, a cargo of general experts, and not a single cook or rifle shot in the load. You should have seen the whole crew running away from a giant ostrich-like bird on a planet we called Noman's because it was uninhabited by anything but birds and big beetles. The one man who tried to shoot the thing knocked a limb off a tree twenty feet from the bird. The rest ran away. I swore then I'd never make another trip to space without a man like Farar along."

Farar, his face sombre, completed the tale: "And the bird kicked three highly educated technicians to death while the rest scrambled back into the ship. I understand, Harry. I know what you mean. Worran is the only man I really trust on a jungle trip, and Janey and Alinoa the only women. Nothing can complicate such a venture like a person unacquainted with outdoor life."

Startled, Ancil asked: "How did you know that? We never made the incident public, in fact very little has been published . . . Oh! I forgot that Venusian *yarva* of yours—you read it in my mind! It's just another thing we forgot to take along, an experienced telepath like you. Venusian colonials, just one more reason the tragedy occurred. You know the rest of the story, I see. It's good to be understood, Frank! You know I'm aboveboard, shocked, disgusted with the ordinary so-called technical specialists inadequacy when faced with the unknown. I sure wish I could read minds; that is a gift worth having."

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"You're overwrought, Harry. You can come along to the Farar tree house, but it might be better if you slept here, as we're pretty much in the woods over there; the racket from the jungle would keep you awake. You've got to take care of your nerves—from now on you'll need them."

Farar watched while the executive calmed his obviously agitated mind, and felt a twinge of sympathy when he noted the man's hands were shaking. "It's good to be understood, Frank—" Ancil repeated. "I'm here partly because of my nerves. My work was killing me! Not cut out for it, somehow. Too many tensions, too many cigars and conferences and cocktails and clutter. I had to get away from it—your request for a ship opened a door for me. I've been tired for months . . . well, I talk too much. Just another symptom of incipient breakdown."

Frank nodded gravely, and the big man excused himself, was shown to a room by our Greenie maid. When he was gone, I yawned, asked Frank: "Do you really mean to take him, or not? I don't see how you can refuse."

"He's actually a sick man, and he thinks I can cure him. Maybe we can—Alinoa thinks so. We'd better all get to bed, busy days ahead."

Later, as they were leaving, I drew Farar aside. "What about that murder? We can't have a murderer aboard."

Frank shook his head. "It wasn't murder! It was aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. The man deserved it. Only the law would call it murder. I'm not a court of law. I like him and I trust him. We can vote on it, but I already know the women would accept. He has done us a favor; he asks little in return. Don't be silly, we need him badly."

I nodded, and went to bed to dream of hook-winged monsters diving upon hordes of bespectacled professors, while I screamed trying to warn them.

IT was a wrench, leaving Venus. I had come to Venus as a small boy, never left it but for short trips to Earth on buying excursions for mining equipment. Janey and Frank had both been born and raised on Venus, but of earth stock. Alinoa, a kind of Xtabay of the Fenir-dren, the most interesting of the three great races of Venus, was not disturbed by the prospect. In her tradition space travel was natural to her race. She felt that it was only a return to a former way of life, felt like a leader finding a way for her people back to their promised land.

The two Greenie hunters Frank had selected to go along, as well as the half-dozen young Fenir-dren braves (Fenir-dren are not web-footed, have very slight webs on their hands, perhaps from a faint admixture of Greenie blood since the race came to Venus) her tribe had appointed to guard her person, were all linked together by their common possession of the telepathic faculty peculiar to the Venusian peoples.

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Without Ancil, his three engineer-pilots, and the two rocket men Frank had hired, it would have been foolhardy to undertake the voyage. The duralum hull was packed with gadgetry as enigmatic to the rest of us as the conidoblast of a coelenterate.

However, I learned from their talk that the main drive mechanism was of rather simple nature, and the really complicate gadgets were expendable, such as artificial gravity generators, computing devices, autogyros, things space pioneers had managed to do without for nearly a century. We could do the same in a pinch.

The main obstacle to really long voyages in the past had been the impossibility of carrying enough fuel for the wasteful jet drives. The advent of the true atomic jet had not solved the problem, as the shielding, the cooling liquids, and other weighty gadgetry of the first atomic drives had neutralized their greater power generation.

But recent advances in the field of atomics had developed new methods. This particular drive depended on atomic disintegration, but the actual breakdown only generated heat which was used to cause expansion in certain liquid gases which formed the jets. These gases were vastly more compressible, were not in fact true gases, but products formed from the breakdown of certain alloys lately developed. The net result was a ship which could be fueled for a star journey of some thousands of times the old solar system jumps.

I understood that the only expenditure of fuel was in getting off a planet and in getting up sufficient velocity to cross the void in a reasonable length of time. Beyond that my mental processes were hopelessly Earthbound. It was not until we had actually shut off the drive and I saw our sun receding at a visible rate of diminution behind us that I knew we were really traveling faster than the older rockets had ever managed. I turned to Janey, who could always pluck for me any information I wanted out of any adjacent mind. "Just how do they get up such speed?"

Janey looked wise, pretending she wasn't just reading it out of young Hendryks' head. Hendryks was busy at the controls, scribbling computations which he passed to Holderness, our other navigator. After each session of scribbling and fiddling with the automatic computers, Hendryks would make a minute adjustment of a large lever that stuck up in front of the bank of instruments across the whole transparent bow section.

"It's really a lot simpler than the older ships," began Janey. "It seems that all that held them back in the old days was they didn't realize that once a ship is out in space, it's weightless. It seems they never, in fact, used their power when the ship was in a weightless position between planets. They didn't know that only a little power will increase the velocity of a weightless ship to interstellar magnitude. They didn't know it because they always used their jets just to get off Earth or Venus or Mars, and

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to get up speed enough to reach the nearest planet. It was only by accident that some pilot finally figured out the simple truth—any ship could reach the stars if the power was applied when the ship was between planets. They had always coasted between planets, before, to conserve fuel. Simple?"

I grinned. "So the barrier between man and the stars was just his dumb brain, eh? Just as I suspected! Now they've built a ship not a lot different than the old ones, after they learned that fact, and call it a new development. They've loaded her with small jets to drive her during her weightless condition, and with big jets for use in landings and take-offs, and called the whole thing the new interstellar drive. I get it."

Janey laughed. "It's almost like that, Hal. But not quite that bad. They have had nearly a century of interplanet travel experience to draw on. You know that."

IT wasn't dull, even after the first few days. We were shooting along at an unimaginable speed, a speed you couldn't even say in figures you could understand, toward a star Frank called Altair. I got out the books and looked it up. All I could find in that position was Vega, stated to be 26 light years distant. I asked Frank: "How come Altair?"

Frank nodded toward Alinoa, her lovely translucent face now rapt in the spectacle of the stars ahead. "She says her people came from those stars, she thinks from near Altair. I suspect they came from near Vega. Altair is so much farther. The stars have moved since then. She claims the voyage only took her ancestors some two years, according to their records. According to my book, Vega is traveling toward us, must have been farther away then. But you know, Hal, I have a suspicion that star travel is going to upset a lot of accepted ideas about the stars. I think we're going to discover the stars are not as far away as the astronomers have computed them to be. There are several reasons for thinking that, but chiefly I gather that from talking to Alinoa about her tribe's ancient records. They have supposedly authentic accounts of star trips that took only weeks. It just couldn't be unless there's something wrong with astronomy."

I looked wise. I hadn't even thought about a star since I was a kid. You get out of the habit of thinking about the sky on Venus, where you never even see the sun for months on end. But I had a thought: "I've read that astronomers had to revise a lot of text books when the first space flights were made to Venus and Mars. They were a lot closer than they were supposed to be. Or else space ships just jump across when they get away from gravity."

"It's a little of both, I think." Frank was watching Alinoa, who seemed to be praying with her eyes closed. We knew she was reaching out with her *yarva,* trying to sense what lay ahead. "The light distortion of the atmosphere envelope of

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Earth gave rise to a lot of errors that remained on the books because there was no good way to prove them wrong. And Earth scientists had no way of testing their physical theories in a weightless state, didn't even imagine the speeds a weightless ship could travel under a powerful drive. We may arrive at our first star in a few days, instead of the computed weeks of travel. It's all guesswork, up to now. It's up to us to measure and prove the distances we travel to our own satisfaction. A weightless mile is traveled over a lot faster than a mile under gravity, and there's so far no good way of knowing just how far or fast we do travel. Sure you can take star observations, compute and triangulate endlessly, and only wind up wondering how much optical distortion entered into your observational data."

Ancil, who had been standing by Hendryks watching the process of navigation which the two navigators kept up like some incessant ritual of check and recheck, turned around to Frank and I. "That's one thing disgusted me most with the experts on our first trip. They just couldn't get it through them that the real thing was going to be far different from what they had been taught to expect. When the *Voidspanner* began to span voids at speeds they had no conceivable method for measuring, they lost their heads, demanded the speed be cut down, wasted fuel and ruined our nerves with their impossibly askew reasoning about things that were obvious to any man with an open mind, able to accept the actual truth when it occurred before their eyes. They were sure the stars were many light years distant, that it took a lifetime to get near the closest of them, and they just couldn't accept the truth when it occurred—that distance is relative to drag, and there is no drag in free space. We hopped across what were supposed to be light years in days, and the experts couldn't reconcile fact with their preconceived theories. Every prediction the experts made about the trip proved false."

I looked out the curved plastic view panes, at the weird glitter of alien stars ahead. They didn't even look like any stars I had even seen, but I only remembered stars as I had watched them as a little boy on Earth. Frank said: "If you'll watch closely, you can see them move! Yet no astronomer would accept that a space ship could move fast enough to give perceptible motion to the fixed stars."

I watched, exclaimed: "They are moving, drawing aside, we're plunging into the spaces between . . ." My mind could not grasp the speed we must have attained. There had been no pressure of acceleration, the half-normal gravity given by our artificial grav generators had made the ship seem perfectly stationary. Frank murmured, still at my side, peering ahead with me: "We're probably exceeding light speed now, but no man really knows the speed of light in space. It's only been properly observed under laboratory conditions on Earth. No

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one knows even why light travels as fast as it does travel. Well, we aren't being affected by gravity, now. Why shouldn't we travel faster than light? We have our own drive power. Light gets only one push, its first and last. We get innumerable pushes, the constantly expanding gases of our drive give us steadily increasing acceleration."

I grunted, watching the stars slide imperceptibly aside. Blinking, I saw several gray specks where a moment before had been only the pure blackness of space. I felt a thrill of terrific discovery, shouted at the top of my voice: "Man, there're dark bodies dead ahead! They must be sunless planets! We must be mighty close even to see them; they're nearly as black as space itself."

Frank glanced at the back of Holderness' head, bent over that enigmatic master lever that I assumed controlled the one tiny jet still operating. "Have you spotted the dark objects ahead?" he asked.

Holderness turned, his face blond and young and full of a tense delight. "Most astronomers always claimed there were dark planets in space, close to Earth, but none of them could ever prove where or how many or what size. We're the first to see them! But if we slow down to look at them, it'll waste a lot of fuel. This first trip, we'd better stick to our schedule, not go glomming around at every object we pass, or we'll learn that we need more fuel than we have. Guess we'll have to pass them up. Couldn't be any life on a sunless planet, anyway.

Frank grinned. "They're probably just rocks. With the possibility of exploring living planets ahead, let's not spend our time looking at dead ones. Sail on!"

I'd been wondering ever since Frank first proposed the trip, just why he had. I said: "I never have quite believed your little fabrication of excuses for leaving Venus, Frank. You were one Earth man who loved Venus, and the only one fully adjusted. There's a deeper reason than hunting some beast, isn't there?"

Frank grinned.

"Of course, a mighty big reason. I like Venus, and I was never happier than lately, in the tree house the Greenies built. They didn't pry, they have been very good neighbors. But I didn't want you or anyone blurting out the real reason for this attempt to reach the stars, starting a lot of gossip that could mean intervention from Earth. There are some very officious people in the United Nations bureau of extra-terrestrial affairs. They might have worried if they knew I expected to contact a powerful race who had visited Venus and Earth and the other planets in comparatively recent times. I've had quite a lot of time to discuss her ancestors with Alinoa, and they fascinated me. We went to her former home, you remember where. We dug up everything pertaining to their travels in space. Alinoa is perhaps the only living being who could have correctly translated much of what we found."

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I waited, but he stood staring at the stars slowly regrouping themselves ahead as we sped toward them. It seemed impossible that we could be moving so rapidly the stars would show movement. At last he went on: "We found not only full accounts of the original colonization of Venus by the Fenir-dren, but later accounts. They came in quite recent times to Venus, tracing down their own history, to learn what became of the once populous nation descended from the original settlers. Naturally they didn't stay. Venus was but a savage sinkhole to them. But they did leave accurate star charts to guide us. What more could a hunter want than the maps to lead him?"

I gave a sigh of relief. "So you didn't get us all out here on our way to nowhere, just to satisfy your ideas of sport."

He gave me a hurt look, unusual on his always imperturbable face. "Did I ever take you into any danger that could be avoided? Would you have gotten out alive without me, when we did run into trouble? I don't think I deserve that remark."

I apologized. It had been inept. He couldn't help being a hunter, any more than I could help being too dense to catch more than half of what went on around me. "I didn't mean that the way it sounded! But you are also going to some world where some particular beast lives that you want to shoot. I know you'll get a shot at a scarpein, just as you said you wanted to."

He smiled. "Well, the animal was one of the reasons they left their home world. But they had other reasons, hinted at in untranslatable fragments of record. It was an untamable world then, its terrific vitality making the competition between life forms the force that raised them to the heights. It was also the force that raised up their nemesis, whatever it was, from which they fled."

"I don't see why you want to go to a world that a superior race found untenable! How do you expect to live where they found it impossible in spite of their superior abilities? What's the pitch, Frank?"

He looked at me, and I felt that old thrill of danger that only he could convey, peril that he could see and I could not even sense. His voice was low and full of an ominous brooding. I could guess how many nights he had lain, sleepless and in thought over this thing. "That race fled from some terrible threat, fled for years across the starfields. Some of them hid themselves away in the caverns they bored into Venus' primal crust. Others fled on into trackless and unknown areas of space. They dispersed over the whole galaxy as rapidly and in as many directions as they had ships."

I licked my lips, my mouth dry with the thing I was sensing in what he said. Janey had come up behind him, and I knew she had known all along. I began to understand.

Frank finished in a low voice I could hardly hear: "Man has to *know* that terrible thing from which they fled . . . what it was, what it is, what

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it will be! The threat may have vanished in the past where Alinoa's people vanished. It may be living still, waiting only to discover new victims. It must be intelligent, a powerful race, to scatter the Fenir-dren before it as it did. If we find it, Hal, we've got to go on, understand it. If it follows us, we may have to flee ourselves on into outer space, so that it does not follow us home to Earth. But where such a threat exists, there man has got to have an outpost, got to *know* about it! Better to try, than to have it come down on earth. Better for us forewarned to search it out than for the new exploratory expeditions to run into it unprepared. It looked to me like a job that needed doing! I could be wrong. But I think not."

Janey explained to me, as Frank turned away. "He believes dangers have to be faced, not ignored. And the records were pretty explicit about the thing, in some ways."

I shook my head. "Won't we be discovering ourselves to it, rather than the other way around? Won't we be poking up a hornet's nest that were better left untouched? Better to ignore it, go the other direction, than to run headlong into it!"

Janey nodded, as if agreeing with me. "It's just that we've got to know what they fled from, and where it is now. Why did they go, so far and so many and so long ago? And why did they come back, if they were so afraid? Frank thinks it isn't there now, but that we can learn, in the world where they first existed, what the thing might be.

"It's so long ago!" I persisted. "It doesn't make sense to come out here just for an old legend."

Janey laughed. "I would like to have seen someone stop you from coming along. Or anyone stop Frank, once he made up his mind star travel was possible."

I laughed, too. "This is his justification of doing what he would have done anyway. But it's not mine! I just wanted to see what the other suns have in the way of planets. I don't think it's necessary to chase any bugaboos to justify the trip."

Holderness turned away from his slide rule and his constant taking of sights along an instrument set in the forward view pane. "If you ask me, nobody has to explain why they want to make this trip to me. I can't sleep for excitement, for wondering about what we'll learn. This is Man's greatest jump ahead, to reach the stars. The whole dunderheaded history of man is justified if one of these trips is even partially successful. It opens up the universe to Man. I'm with Frank in wanting to trace down anything that chased a similar race out of these parts of space. If there is such a threat to our existence, it's best we know about it before it knows about us."

As if in after thought, Holderness said: "Tell Captain Farar we're going to begin deceleration in ten minutes. We're over the halfway mark on our course."

Holderness brought the ship out of her terrific interstellar speed grad-

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ually, and some days later we found ourselves pin-wheeling around a big green planet at a speed that left us little to observe below but a blur. We were too far out to be affected by the atmosphere, and we settled down to wait till the braking effect of our spin against gravity slowed us down. I didn't understand the principle of braking a ship against a planet's attraction, and watched Holderness at work with somewhat doubtful eyes. I couldn't figure how he expected the ship to slow down, for I knew the moon had been whirling around Earth for too long to think about, and apparently hadn't slowed down yet.

The blur began to go out of the landscape below, and we began to make out details. Almost the first thing we sighted was a city, a huge pattern of squares, sliced across with the long shadows of towers at regular intervals. The whole planet was seen to be under cultivation; even the mountain sides were terraced. I grumbled to Janey: "If this world contains any threat, it doesn't show up in the landscape. It looks like a Heaven for a farmer."

Janey didn't have anything to say, And I knew she was trying to *yarva* what lay below. The hours dragged by, and at last we settled lower, began to heat up as we touched the outer edge of atmosphere. It wouldn't be long, and we would have the thrill of setting foot on the first planet to be reached beyond the solar system.

As the obviously well populated world below became more and more visible, we saw flitting dots move from place to place, realized the creatures below had air flight, at least. Or else wings . . . I began to get into a fever of speculation as to what manner of life had created that checkerboard of tilled fields and tall towers, of round and square and oblong structures, that queerly familiar pattern of life which was yet strangely not familiar, being much too regular, too repetitive of certain predominant forms such as the obelisk-like towers.

"Something down there gives me the shivers," murmured Janey, for my ears alone.

Then came what I had been expecting after seeing the flying dots that could be nothing but air ships. We were sighted, and a swarm of them came up to observe us. They were queerly built craft, long canoe-like fuselages, with wings thrust upward at an angle. They were not built for speed—they could get up to our height, but could not keep up with our flight. They must have had to strain a throttle to do sixty—so we progressed through a constant succession of the queer-winged shapes, which were sighted ahead only to disappear behind us. All their efforts to get a good look at us must have resulted in nothing but a glimpse—here it is, there it was. We could catch tantalizing glimpses of the interior of the long, narrow fuselages, several white patches at the windows that might have been faces, but could as well have been the rear ends of monkeys for all the features we could make out.

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We shot on around into the night shadow, and decided to set down the next likely place we saw as we came on around into the light again.

The landing was bumpy, but not too much so, and I gave a sigh of infinite relief as I felt the natural gravity of the planet under my feet.

Nothing was done about opening the ports, or even of looking out the viewpanes to see what went on. Instead, we gathered around Alinoa, and I realized that they meant to pool their telepathic powers to get a good mental picture of the minds outside before they ever cracked an air lock. I grunted dismally. Again my lack of Venusian perception was leaving me out in the cold. I might as well have been blind, for all the good it was doing me to land upon an alien planet. I sat down and picked up the last issue of the *Venusian Colonist*, now months old and very well worn. So far as I was concerned, I would know nothing until Janey got ready to tell me.

But all at once Janey let out a scream: "It's horrible! They can't be human beings! They can't be!"

I jumped to my feet, trying to extract from their expressions what they were hearing that was so horrible. But there was only that far-off look of the *yarva* mind at work. There was only a kind of grimness, as if they were looking at a monster, and didn't like the sight.

"What is it?" I bellowed.

"It's their society, Hal," explained Janey. "They just don't live like people, but they are. They don't even bear their own children, or love each other, or anything. They have a kind of insect system of reproduction, and a few do the breeding for all. It's horrible; disgusting."

I relaxed. At least the "horrible" thing wasn't bearing down on our ship. "So what?" I asked. "What's it to us how they breed?"

"They've bred out emotions, it seems, by taking away all family from the individual. They just don't sound like people, rather like lost souls, wondering when life begins. It's pitiful. And there are the breeders, wallowing in a kind of mental ooze, being artificially fed, being inseminated with tubes, never even seeing their own children. And the children all come from a selected few, a pitiful imprisoned, helpless motherhood!

"Why stay?" I asked "There isn't much else on the planet that I can see; and you seem to know all about them already. Why wait to have them look us over? They might decide to put us to work, or something. Let's go, before they even know we're here."

"They know," growled Frank. "But they aren't much interested. I don't believe they'd attack us."

"Well, look here," I exploded, "isn't this the world where you thought 'the great threat' originated? Now all of you seem to think it's the most uninteresting place imaginable!"

Janey came out of her *yarva* to give me a push. "Oh, why did you have to be born on Earth? You miss everything. It isn't uninteresting, it's fascinating. They aren't interested in

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anything a body would *expect.*"

Frank came out of the combination trance in which they had all been indulging, and laughed. "Hal, we're going out and inspect these people first hand. This is one time I don't think we can trust *yarva*. The impressions we get are entirely too negative to be true. Let's get our outfit ready and drag the town."

GETTING ready for our first sortie on an alien world, I extracted additional data from my friends. The name of the planet was Nadar, a very old world with an age-old culture. The people called themselves Nadarines, and the particular area we had landed on was called Necia. But it was a world suffering from a plague of repressive conquerors, and only fragments of their own past was known to them. I could only gather the people were afraid even to think of their conquerors, and that was the one thing we wanted most to learn from them.

About the only portable modern weapons we had brought were clips of explosive cartridges for our old rifles. Frank got ready for meeting this great alien civilization with the same nonchalant confidence he outfitted for a hunting trip on Venus, and as far as I could see, he carried little more. Less, in fact. Just his rifle and the new cartridges, as well as a pocketful of his own make, loaded by himself. The air was a fair approximation of terrestrial atmosphere, except for traces of gases strange to our two technicians, though innocuous or inert to all their tests. I took my own rifle, and an old .45 on my hip. It was the same one Frank had once advised me against taking on my first river trip on Venus. He had said it would sink me if we tipped our canoe and had to swim far.

Holderness and Hendryks, and our other three Earthmen remained with the ship, not because they wanted to, but because they might have to use it as an offensive weapon if we ran into trouble. But I knew that *yarva* had opened to us the minds of these people, and was confident that only some unforeseeable accident might precipitate disaster.

Frank and Ancil and Janey and I preceded the half-dozen Fenir-dren warriors, led by Alinoa in their feathers and carrying their ornate, ancient needle guns.

I asked: "Do they have *yarva* sensitives here too? If they do, I'm going back to the ship myself, I'll know just as much about what's going on!"

Janey giggled, and I gathered they were not sensitives. "They're wondering if we are breeders or neuters, Hal," she explained, but I still didn't understand what she was giggling about. "If we are breeders, they are wondering if we came to acquire some alien sperm to vitalize our race. It's funny, the way they think about it."

They were waiting for us, row on row of solemn, rather empty faces, handsome faces, but lacking in animation. There was no jostling, no verbal greeting, just a silent, gloomy stare from almost identical countenances. There was something dreadful

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about them, and I realized abruptly that here was a race of sterile workers, like ants; people without the emotions we consider normal, because they were the products of a system of breeding which left them no reason to have emotions.

"What are they living for?" I asked Janey, as the throng did not move nor register surprise or even recognition of similar structure. Any one of them alone could have passed for an Earthman, except for the brief costume of straight-cut tunic and grass sandals. Seen altogether, they looked like nothing but a gathering of clothing store dummies.

"They live to work," explained my wife.

The whole excursion was like that. The gestures Frank used to question them were relayed to a dark-robed, empty-faced dignitary who led us through a wide, crumbling doorway into one of the tower-like structures.

We all lined up inside and waited impatiently before a dais of dark old wood, on which was one empty chair. It was a very magnificent chair; that is, it had been once, though now the gilt was peeling, and the gems had many of them fallen from the settings. I had seen things quite as attractive in junk shops, though perhaps not as rococo. Presently an old and tragic-faced individual came from behind the richly embroidered but visibly ragged tapestry which hung back of the chair. He looked us over impassively, then gabbled incomprehensibly at us. Frank shook his head and said in English, "We don't understand what you say."

But Alinoa, evidently catching many familiar sounds in the gibberish, stepped out from beside Frank. She spread her hands in an eloquent gesture of pleasure, and spoke some words which even I could recognize as the more ancient original Fenir-dren, known only to the caste among her people who were dedicated to keeping the memory of their great forebears alive.

The old creature's face lit up with an intense excitement, ecstasy shone from him, he teetered down from that musty but once royal-appearing dais, seized the graceful glass-like hands of our Alinoa in his bird-like claws of aged, wrinkled flesh, and said the only few words I could have recognized certainly. "The Fenir-dren, the ancient ones—the children of the Stars!"

Alinoa, evidently reading the mind behind the tragic dark-circled old eyes was suddenly stricken with grief. Her eyes filled with tears, and she embraced the old man, her speech so rapid and in such an intensely emotional tone I could not possibly follow with my limited knowledge of the ancient tongue, picked up from Alinoa herself.

There was a great deal of this between the two, and when at last the old man turned away and disappeared behind his ragged tapestry, we filed out and went directly to the ship. Frank ordered the ship aloft at once.

Janey filled in for me: "They are a race subject to terrible conquerors. He is one who once ruled a great part

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of this world, now reduced to a puppet existence, Governor of this province of Necia, appearing at times under orders to appease his unhappy people who would die to be free. He asked us to leave before the evil ones learn of our coming. At first he thought we were saviors sent by their ancient forebears, a branch of the colonizing Fenir-dren. But his hopes were dashed when he learned who we are, and he warned us to get away while we can. Their conquerors are a parasitic life form, some beast he fears so he could not even convey a clear impression of just what it looks like. The conquerors he calls the 'Vail,' a race which has forced the Nadarines into mass production methods of breeding, like domesticated cattle, only worse. They are periodically visited by a fleet of the conquerors, who live on another world, and rule many worlds which they visit only temporarily. When they come they take a third of the young people, evidently for food, though they teach the young that they are dedicated to a great future when they are taken by the Vail, a religious cover for the brutal facts. This race of the Vail must be the mysterious threat from which the original Fenir-dren fled. Perhaps our own forebears came from the same source, and all trace of our origin since lost . . ."

I digested the rather frightening information, then asked: "And where are we heading now? Far away out of the Vail sphere of influence, I hope?"

Janey smiled. "You know Frank. We came here to see Sira, the original home world of the Fenir-dren people from whom Alinoa is descended, a separate nation which was but a part of the greater Fenir race. Alinoa wants to see Sira, and Frank wants to shoot a Scarpein. Vail or no Vail, we're going to Sira."

I moved over to Frank where he and Alinoa were conferring with Hendryks over the charts, trying to lay out a probable course toward Sira. They had been able to get little information from the Nadarines, I could guess, but certainly something must have been learned. I asked: "Are these Vail critters on Sira, too?"

Frank was grave as he measured my own agitated face. Both of us realized fully, I saw, that we could not afford to run into a great nation of creatures who made a habit of turning men and women into domesticated beasts destined for slaughter. Frank said: "The poor humans of Nadar are not allowed to know about any other world, even their airplanes are frowned upon. They are taught that the Vail are superior beings, Gods, not to be questioned. They don't know. Sira might even be their headquarters, and it might be uninhabited—we could not learn. We are going to take a chance, look it over, then get out of this part of space if we can't learn anything about the Vail without risking capture by them."

DELTA SIRA, as Alinoa assured us the world was called, was

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soon reached. There had been no more stops to look at the planets we neared, no deviation from the course they had decided upon toward that body which to Alinoa seemed to correspond to ancient Sira's position relative to others. We made ready to land again, inwardly praying that we weren't walking into another Nadar, peopled by humans long despoiled of everything that places man above the beast.

As the continents became distinguishable from the oceans, as the immense size of the world became more and more evident, something of awe and fear crept into each heart, for this was a mighty world. It seemed so huge it must surely crush us. But Alinoa reassured us all. "It is that tells me we have found the right planet. Sira was very large, but like a hollow ball. One's weight upon it is even less than upon Venus."

At last we were slowed, and descending, screamed down through an atmosphere layered with rainbow mists, catching glimpses of vast rocky headlands, of blinding white beaches, immense mountains wreathed in glorious clouds, of virgin forests reaching everywhere, and nowhere the telltale patchwork of tilled fields.

Of cities, either ruinous or newbuilt, we saw not a sign. I knew Frank was heaving a sigh of relief like myself, for Nadar had left a bad taste in our mouths. We wanted no more contact with civilization of any kind in this part of space. Yet Alinoa was showing signs of disappointment, for if her calculations were correct, there should be monumental artifacts, the remains of a once mighty civilization.

She stood in the curved bow view-panes, her hands trembling with excitement as she pointed out landmarks which proved to her this was indeed Sira, homeworld of perhaps all mankind, and surely of her own ancestors. The records which always before had seemed to her veiled in a kind of legendary dimness, now were bright with truth as Sira showed the mountains and vast cliffs above mighty rivers, the "scarpe" cliffs she was expecting to find. These immense barriers were the nesting places, the aeries of the terrible Scarpein monsters, supposed to dwell in horrible bone-laden grottoes along the cliff walls. We kept well away from these terrific walls, for in the ancient tales the flying beasts were said to attack the greatest flying ships, often wrecking them.

I muttered to Frank: "I can believe in the thing, now that I see the cliffs. Nowhere else could such a thing develop—the scene is set for no other actor."

"We'll not be walking under those cliffs, Worran!" called Frank, and Janey made a face of horror, for the vivid pictures of the terrible dive of the winged monster from the rocky heights was in their minds.

Our ship had left the mighty canyon country behind, and we were rocking violently as the nose jets slowed us for the turnabout. We strapped in the seats, and with Hendryks at the controls the big craft

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swung end for end, settled on the rear jets to crash at last through the trees to a not ungentle landing. We could see nothing from the pilot chamber, as the bow view-panes pointed skyward, and it took many minutes to orient ourselves to the changed direction. What had been deck was now our wall, the aft walls now the deck.

"No one leaves the ship till tomorrow," ordered Farar, but there were no arguments given him. I spent the night listening to the jungle sounds with a sensitive sound system augmenter attached to a pick-up in the hull. Many of the others snored soundly, which to me was amazing with the wonder of a new world waiting outside. But the *yarva* sensitives had no doubt sensed an absence of peril—some comforting lack of human thought made them at ease. Farar and I spent most of the night discussing the possibilities of this world and this area, infested as we knew the surrounding planets must be with the mysterious Vail race.

"I can't figure anything but to run like hell, Frank! We have no possible chance against an armed race who have possessed space travel for possibly an age! It's insanely reckless for us to be here, knowing what we know!"

Franks grim face refused my point of view. "It's more insane to turn your back on a danger like this. If we run, mankind will never get a chance to learn about the Vail before they find our worlds and attack. We've got to monkey around, hoping to blunder on something that will give us sufficient information about them to make a return to Earth morally acceptable. It just isn't honest to weigh our own safety against the safety of our whole race."

I could see what he meant, but I couldn't accept his idea that our remaining here longer was anything but asking for trouble. I objected. "The chances of our being captured by them are multiple, the chance of our obtaining any pertinent information as to their weapons, their nature, their weaknesses is a one in a million shot. Seems to me our lives are not the consideration, but that our best chance of doing the right thing lies in our getting out of here now. We have a chance to warn Earth, a chance we'll lose if we remain longer. We know enough, we must return at once."

Frank shook his head. "They wouldn't even listen. You heard Ancil describe the kind of Earth minds we'd be up against. Pedants, overeducated nincompoops, they would demand photographs, sound records, actual concrete proof of the existence of the Vail and of their strength. Otherwise they would call us alarmists, pay no attention. This thing must be done right. We must find proof to take back with us; indisputable proof."

Thinking of the living ghosts of the Nadar world, a once wonderful land haunted now by the ambling, empty-faced cattle of the Vail, I knew there was no shirking our task. We had to uncover proof of the Vail's threat to

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Earth's future, and we had to take it back. I knew that, agreed with him, but emotionally I was certain it was a task too great for us. The rest of the night we put the thing from our minds, discussed the scarpein, planned tests to make certain the air was fit for us to breathe, overhauled our guns and got ready grenades to use if we had to face any creature too tough for a bullet to kill.

Toward morning we both managed to get to sleep, and I will swear it was only minutes before Janey was shaking me.

"Wake up, noodle-noodle, you've just got to see the sun come up on Sira. Never was there such a sunrise! Don't dress — come along — " Half dragging me in my rumpled pajamas, she towed me to the side viewpanes, pointed—and I gasped. The whole horizon flamed before my sleepy eyes, scarlet and gold and soft shades of a thousand indescribable hues painted the towering cumuli, washed the snowcapped peaks with a riot of color beyond any vocabulary's pitiful attempt to describe. Sunrise on Sira was beyond talking about, too violently brilliant to accept, too immensely awe-inspiring to look at, in fact. I turned away, thoroughly awake, filled with the old thrill of discovery, the ecstatic awareness of immense beauty outside only waiting my eyes to begin its magic was almost unbearable. I hugged Janey, her radiant face more assimilable than the vast display of sky, and we moved off arm in arm to find out what was to be the plan for the day —and to find some breakfast.

ANCIL, among other things, had added to our cargo a small plane, of knock-down construction. It was one of the things the pedagogs had neglected to take along on the first voyage made by the IAC interstellar craft. He knew how to fly, was astounded when he learned they had no plane "because it took up too much cargo space." This first morning, after the air had been declared breatheable and devoid of harmful microbes—as Alinoa had said it would be—we spent the first hours unloading and fitting Ancil's plane for flight. Installing mapping camera and film and rechecking the engine and other gadgets took Ancil and Hendryks the rest of the eight-hour light day of Sira. The rest of us erected an electric fence around some two acres of level ground, set up two machine guns just in case, and readied ourselves for an extended stay at our present location.

It seemed impossible to me that an alien world would be safe from a disease standpoint, until I remembered that cities where there are many men are places where disease is rampant, while virgin forests have always been extolled for their lack of disease-producing organisms. Where there were no men, there would be few living things able to prey on man. There was no reason to expect disease, and there was none to be detected.

The next day Ancil took the little

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flyer aloft for a preliminary survey, came back with complete pictorial maps of the region for hundreds of miles around. Busy putting the films through their processing, Frank asked Ancil: "Any signs of the scarpein? They're supposed to attack any big flying thing they see, whether it looks good to eat or not. Just plain jealous of their air, I suppose."

Ancil shook his head. "I'm rather surprised there isn't more animal and bird life than I saw. Either the planet has animal life particularly skillful in concealing itself, or else something keeps their numbers mighty low. I don't like it. I'd say the place had been intensively hunted for centuries, animal life kept at a very low point. That means something I don't like to think about."

I looked at Frank, who scowled. "That means we've got to take up concealment as a constant thing. No more flights. Something that exterminates animal life means a mighty dangerous something. We have got to proceed as if we were at war and this camp were behind the enemy lines."

Frank and I decided, with the others' consent, to give up our first intention of installing a camp in the open. Leaving the two of us behind, they obeyed his orders and took the ship aloft, lowered it into the huge, slow moving river just beyond the cliffs which formed the boundary of the plateau upon which we had landed. Concealed beneath the water, they were to wait while Frank and I scouted the country on foot, thoroughly, in the only way it could be done.

Starting off on foot, with only our rifles and small packs of provisions, we moved through the too silent forest toward the cliffs. "If the big flying wing is there in numbers," explained Frank, we can attribute the scarcity of animal life to its appetite. If not, if the scarpein is missing or very few in numbers, then we know some race like the Vail uses this world for a hunting ground.

Coming out of the forest on the cliff top, we stood there, the immense vista overwhelming. The whole watershed spread out for hundreds of miles in descending tier on tier of forested slopes, through which the river curved in great rushing sweeps of gleaming silver. Directly beneath our feet the sheer rock face was nearly vertical, the lower parts disappearing in the river mists and the tops of the great trees rooted in the debris at the base of the cliff. A thousand feet of vertical drop, I guessed, at least. As we stood silent, a great flat piece of rock below us seemed to detach itself from the Cliff-face and drop down and down, and I cried out in wonder as the object, the precise color and appearance of the rock of the cliff face, suddenly lengthened its fall into a steep glide, so that instead of falling to the base of the cliff, it dived into the center of the rushing river. The flying wing shape of the thing, its obviously sentient directional flight, gave it away.

We both cried out together: "The scarpein! It's protectively colored!"

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Frank, shading his eyes, watching the point where its fountaining splash in the river still left great rings, distorted by the current. "It could hang on these cliffs in swarms—one would never see them."

"That thing weighed tons," I was thrilled to the core, now that the legendary monster was proven fact. "You couldn't tell at this distance just how big!"

Our speculation was cut short by a savage splashing and thrashing in the river, where some great water beast was fighting for its life with the diving predator. A boil of weird forms end-over-ended in the center of the current, and bloody froth rose, dyed the current with great streaks of crimson. Twenty minutes at least the struggle of titans went on in the water, then the vast mottled wing-shape of the scarpein surfaced, blowing water like a whale from the center of its body. It dived again quickly, to reappear in a moment, not to fly, but to tow ashore some heavy body which remained nearly submerged. Gouts of blood from the hidden shape dyed the whole path. The monster swam powerfully, its triangular shape rippling with strength.

With curiously ungainly motions the swimming beast got its prey ashore, heaving itself up the beach on its wingtips, clinging to its prey with the hooks which lined the trailing edge of the wings. Once the thing was out of the water, we saw it was a big water lizard, long-necked, with paddles instead of feet. The scarpein turned around with heavy ponderous flops of its wings. It was limbless, a pure flying-wing shape, like a manta ray. Its mouth took up the whole center portion of the leading edge.

It fell to feeding, biting off great chunks of the bleeding lizard, which still lived and struggled feebly to regain the water.

On the golden sands of the river beach the scarpein was clearly outlined. The brown red of its body was a precise imitation of the red rocks of the cliff, mottled with some lichen of a brownish-gray color. As it lay feeding, with our field glasses we could see the stalked eyes, retracted as it tugged off another huge bite of food, then extended as it watched the surroundings, moving the eye stalks constantly as if the eyes turned on a pivot in a complete circle.

"What could a creature so formidable be afraid of, that it watches like that?" I asked, not expecting an answer.

Frank's answer gave me a ripple of apprehension. "When we know what it fears, Hal, we'll know who our enemy is on this world. We have one thing in common with that mighty beast. We are strong, but something hidden by these forests is stronger still, more deadly than ourselves."

I moved, as if to proceed along the cliff top, but Frank stopped me. "We've got to take a lesson from that animal, and be just as completely watchful. Those eye movements tell me this is just as dangerous a world as any Venusian swamp, perhaps more so. I'd say the cliff edge

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was far too exposed a place to promenade. You will note the Scarpein hides itself with its coloration. It developed that coloration against some destroying thing. Anyway, I want to wait and see it take off. How can a thing as heavy as that, without legs, get into the air from a prone position on sand? I'd say it couldn't."

Long minutes, perhaps half an hour later, the great wing lying on the beach gave one convulsive thrust with its wing tips, heaved itself a dozen feet into the air. The vast wing shape rippled with an ultra rapid motion, swept out over the water vibrating so rapidly its wing edges gave off an audible hum. The initial effort was over in seconds, and now it was flying, gliding with seemingly effortless ease, the ripple subsiding into a lazy wave of perfect muscles riding the air. Smoothly it arched upward, turning in a wide spiral, the wings moving almost imperceptibly.

Gone now was the ungainly clumsiness of its movements on the beach. Graceful as any bird, master of the element in which it lived, it turned and soared and turned, upward and upward. I beat a swift retreat, hoping to find cover before it reached the level of the cliff top, but Frank was laughing at me, did not move. "It's fed—it won't attack us. Watch it if you want, there is no need to hide from that one."

I grinned, embarrassed, stood with Frank to watch the creature ascend, up and up until it was lost to sight overhead. The Scarpein was everything the Fenir-dren legend had named it, as beautiful as it was monstrous, deadly, strong, yet somehow admirable in its terrific and unique power of flight.

We went on, spent the day within sight of the river, searching the game trails, watching the far-spread titanic landscape, Frank examining every sign of life with an intent abstraction.

Toward evening, we had reached nearly full circle back to our starting point when Frank bent over a peculiar track in soft soil where a great tree had been torn up by the wind of some past storm. Here the jungle had not yet covered the soil with growth, and some gliding form had left its imprint, a print two feet wide, showing the ridges of the underbody, a very strange track for any beast to make.

Frank began to circle the imprint, examining each bit of bent grass, each broken stem, each crushed berry. I knew his skill was as great as the most expert of the jungle-bred Greenies of Venus, and I waited, doing a little looking myself, for that track had given me the creeps. Quite suddenly some sound or movement caught Frank's attention, and he flung himself face down behind a big flowered vine, where it twisted upward about a tree bole. I slid silently into place beside him, and like him, parting the vine tendrils to peer out.

About two hundred feet away, along a little depression in the forest floor, glided a smooth, oval shape. Black as ink, smooth as an egg; without a protuberance — and without legs! Yet it moved, and beneath it

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not a leaf stirred, not a branch crackled with the weight. The thing didn't even touch the soil in its passage!

I glanced at Frank, his lips formed a soundless "V," and into my mind sprang the dread word the poor Nadarines had been so afraid to utter—Vail! The thing was some kind of craft, probably powered with an anti-gravity device, probably capable of flight in the stratosphere, but obviously preferring the concealment of the dense forest.

Frank made a gesture with his hand. It was webfoot sign used by the Venusians, meaning: We are hunted, be silent. Motionless we watched, and the sweat sprang out on me as the thing was followed by another and another. At least a dozen of the weird craft moved silently past, each in the path of the first. I knew now why the scarpein kept its eyes circling on their stalks. There was something horrible about intelligent life which built for itself a ship without windows, silent, solid black in color. If darkness had been ten minutes closer, the objects would have been indistinguishable from the forest shadows at that distance. In a flash of understanding, I realized that that row of gliding black eggs would reach our camp site just as complete darkness closed down. They would be completely invisible in even partial darkness. I breathed a sigh of relief that we had sent our party to concealment beneath the river's surface, brought a glance of warning from Farar that I had made the sound of breath. With a sinking heart, I understood. Farar was not "The Hunter" today. He was one of the hunted, as were we all.

We were cut off from the little cache of supplies we had left in our landing place. We had only our rifles, a couple of pounds of cartridges in our pockets, very little else. But what good were the rifles, when the sound of a shot would bring a fleet of enemy craft down upon us?

WHEN darkness fell, Frank slung his rifle over his shoulder and hand-over-handed up the vine which had hidden us into the branches overhead. I followed as quietly as I could. Frank didn't have to tell me that when the Vail found our landing spot vacant, they would circle outward in search. Up a tree was our only chance tonight.

It was not the first time we had slept in trees, with only our rifles for comfort, but it was the first time we had ever been up against organized, intelligent opposition. As the long night dragged on, I appreciated to the full the position of a wild animal, when a hunting party dogs its trail. It is not a good feeling, to know one's lonesome strength is pitted against a civilization, to know that only wits and constant caution will keep one living, that one's strength is nothing.

Toward morning, I fell asleep, my arm lashed to a limb with my belt. The warmth of Sira's brilliant sun awoke me, to find Frank gone. I waited, knowing he had gone to make sure the searching party had left.

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Waiting there among the leaves, listening to the ecstasy of the birds on the pure morning air, I couldn't help but curse the designer-of-all for putting in every Eden its serpent. This world was made for hearty, happy living, the soil was fantastically rich—such growth as old Earth has not had since the beginning. Venus in all her lush, wet splendor couldn't hold a candle to the vitality of the plant life here. Yet I saw now that Sira had been for untold centuries the hiding place of some monstrous race, probably the very same evil from which the Fenir had fled so long ago. For only an old and numerous race could have produced the floating oval craft we had seen, and only a race habituated to concealment would construct a craft so perfectly adapted to the purposes of stealth. Why should a powerful race think in terms of hiding, of concealment? I could only assume that the beings within those ovals were instinctive hunters, who thought and designed in terms of stalking prey. Certainly if they were the threat from which Alinoa's ancestors had fled, they were not a people who needed to hide themselves except to facilitate attack.

So meditating, an hour passed. The morning had become a bright hot day, when I heard a familiar hiss from below. I let myself down, found Frank returned, saw from his stern expression that nothing good had been learned. He led me some three hundred yards up the slopes, to a spot in a thicket. Parting the leaves, I peered cautiously out, saw the level forest floor, the broken limbs and great gouges in the earth where our ship had landed. For minutes, that was all I saw. Then I saw our cache, which we had not taken time to bury. We had only wrapped our things in a tarpaulin, thrown some broken limbs over the bundle. The limbs had been removed, and some twenty feet from the bundle one of the black ovoids waited, almost invisible beneath the heavy shade of a great tree, half concealed by the leaves. A door in the side, a three foot circle, stood open, and just beneath the door stood what I recognized as one of the Vail. Looking at the thing, a shudder of revulsion ran over me, but Frank's hand on my shoulder kept me silent. It was one of these had made the track in the forest that had puzzled Frank. It was some seven or eight feet in length, of a red-brown color, rubbery textured, with a ridged underbody half of which served for support, the rest reared up like a reaching worm. The upper segments were fringed with finger-like flexible arms, perhaps a foot in length. There were no eyes I could discern, but held in two of the undulating fingers was a weapon of some kind, it resembled a long rifle-scope, with a bulb on one end. There was no head. It was a kind of worm, more leech-like in appearance than any other creature of my acquaintance. Yet this thing, seemingly without even a place for a brain, I knew was a member of one of the great races of the galaxy. There was a silent confidence in its motionless waiting, a scorn of our poten-

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tialities in its open motionless pose, it did not even expect to be seen in its semi-concealment. Evidently its acquaintance with humans had led to a scorn for human intelligence. Among the few things I had on me beside my rifle was a small camera. Quietly I removed its case, focused it, snapped several pictures. I put the camera away, and silently we removed ourselves from the vicinity. Moving as rapidly as silence and utter caution would allow, we holed up in the heart of a dense thicket.

I was dying for a smoke, but when hunting, we had always refrained, for nothing is so pungent as burning tobacco on the breeze. Now that we were the hunted, I took it out in cursing the creatures who were seeking us.

"The damn things are nothing but leeches!" I exploded, for a boiling anger had gradually replaced all my mixed emotions aroused at first glimpse of the Vail.

"Did you ever try to kill a leech?" asked Frank, stretching out his legs.

"Yeah, you have to cut them into pieces, and then you're never sure the pieces won't live, too. A bullet probably wouldn't seriously inconvenience them."

"No place to shoot him, that I could figure. The anatomy of a leech is part of my ignorance, but my guess is there is no one place where enough vital organs are located for a bullet to hurt one much. We'd have to take one apart to be sure, of course. Go get me one."

"Leeches don't have fingers. These things have, a hundred or so. Probably the reason they're not still swimming in the ocean where they were spawned. Their fingers gave them the tool-using instinct, which led to intelligence. I'll bet they've been a mighty long time on the way up."

Frank scowled, grunted. "We've got to get back to the ship before they get impatient, start looking for us. If those things get their fingers into our ship, it's all up with mankind, I'd say."

"Could be we're seeing too great a danger in them, but right now I'm convinced we never should have made this trip. We're going to wind up doing exactly what we don't want to do—give an enemy race a lead to our own world's position. What we want to do is get away from the Vail before they know a thing about us."

"They saw us land." Frank's voice was gloomy, and I didn't have to be a *yarva* sensitive to read his mind. He was just as apprehensive as myself.

Quite suddenly, a voice which even I could hear, though it was a soundless voice, came into the thicket, seemed to emanate from a point level with our eyes, a couple of feet away. It was a sweet familiar voice, feminine, yet I didn't know who it belonged to. "You two pessimists should remember that we can hear the Vail, know where they are. Right now, they are gathered around your cache, waiting for you. If you want to see a bunch of them, just take a peek."

Frank looked at me, surprised. He was surprised because I had said, "Who in Heck is that?"

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"That's *yarva*, Hal, but it's the loudest *yarva* I ever heard. You heard that with your mind, not your ears."

"But who—?"

"It was Janey, your wife! I know her mental voice well. But how did she make it so loud? I'd swear that was a beam, a . . . Now I remember! Alinoa brought some of the old Fenirdren mechanisms with her. She told me some of them were for the purpose of communication over great distances, but I didn't think much of it. She seemed to want to tinker them into working order. I thought they were wrecks, useless. She must have fixed one of them!"

We left our thicket, crawled carefully back to the point where we had seen the Vail ship and pilot near our cache. Parting the screen of leaves, I peered out. There were a dozen or fifteen Vail craft, gathered in a circle about our camp. Some five of the big worms stood together, their finger fringes wriggling in what was evidently their conversation, for we could hear no sound. A curious creature, so noiseless they did not even use sound for conversation, their ships were silent, their whole appearance one of stealth. Evidently they had been searching the surrounding forest for us, had given up and returned. As we lay there in the bushes, silent ourselves, watching the curiously quiet scene, there came suddenly from overhead the crash of bursting limbs, fragments of bark and bits of limbs fell in a shower, and I thought certainly the ship had come back, was landing again through the hole she had knocked in the forest roof. But down from the dim green overhead swooped a great red-brown shadow, a mottled and terrifying shape, its vast hook-edged wings spread in a kind of grasping way, as if it clutched the breaking limbs to let it through. A scarpein! From its wide mouth gashed across the wing front there came a roar of gusty anger. The fangs in the mouth were regular, pointed—like a shark's teeth, and the scarpein ground them together with a sound like a saw striking a knot. There was no time to get away from the scene, we could only stay there, frozen, wondering, hoping not to be noticed by the death crashing down upon us. But the monster wing was not looking for us. Like a flail of death, it swooped into the center of the ring of black ovoids, great wings crashing down and rising, heavy center bouncing upward as each wing blow crushed an egg-ship or smashed a Vail into a bloody pulp. If the Vail had weapons, they didn't have time to use them. It was but seconds before the glade was empty of life. The Vail who were still within their ovoids had glided silently backward out of the circle, disappeared in the forest's gloom. The five who had stood conversing in signs, were smashed into the ground, a bloody pulp. Eight smashed black shapes were Vail craft which would never again steal through the forests of Sira. I let out my breath as the big flying thing circled, like a bat, its flight seeming erratic but actually controlled, circled once and sped up-

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ward into the tangle of limbs and disappeared.

"I kind of like that creature—" Frank murmured, and I nodded vigorously, still frozen into a cramped attitude, unable to realize that all need of caution was gone from this part of the woods.

At last I found my breath. "I don't imagine the Vail like him though! He sure hates worms, doesn't he! I wonder if he makes a habit of that? I wonder if they steal through these forests in their little black ships so quietly to keep from being noticed by the scarpeins?

The voice that had startled us out of the air came again, and this time I recognized Janey's presence, not by sound, but by sensing her own mental image of herself. "It wasn't the Scarpein's idea to attack. It was my idea, and the scarpein thought it was his! These old machines work that way. They are so strong, he thought it was himself was sore at the Vail. It was just me, hating them! So he did something about it."

"You drove him to that attack?" I didn't believe her.

Frank leaned back, his eyes very thoughtful. "If they can't handle the monsters any better than that, it looks to me as if we're worrying about a bug-a-boo that isn't there. They couldn't lick Earth . . ."

Janey sniffed, her mental voice expressing scorn. "Those weren't their fighting craft. Those black eggs are just the Vail's idea of a Chevrolet sedan. They use them to get around, not to battle scarpeins. And they're not exactly collision-proof, either. But while they are running from the big bats, you and Frank get back here and we'll take you aboard. No use your prowling around in the bushes."

I looked up at the five hundred foot forest giants under which we were, and up above them to the tops of other, greater trees mounting upward to a thousand feet in the air. Janey, as usual, wasn't being awed by mere size. So far as she was concerned, we were "running around in the bushes."

We moved out of our concealment to look over the wreckage. There had been fifteen of the black ovoids, and eight of them were crushed, battered into bloody fragments, and I realized these worms contained a very great deal of blood—it brought home to me that the blood in them was not all their own, but that of their human cattle. Here and there a bloodstained circle marked where one of the group outside the ships had died, as they had turned to glide away. I tugged at the body of one of them, not so crushed as the others, and it was surprisingly light. There was really nothing to them but the body shell, the fringe of fingers, and the coiled intestines which had held the blood that now stained the ground.

"They've got their brains well hid," I growled, poking at the mess with a stick to try and find the central nervous system. Frank took another stick, pulled the intestines out. Behind the loose bag of organs was a series of white lines, a network of heavier white cords, with nodes at the intersections. "Their brains are prob-

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ably in those nodes, the size of marbles. But they've got hundreds of marbles." Frank's voice was full of disgust, although I had seen him clean game without the slightest distaste for the job.

"Let's hope we've got enough marbles to cope with them," I prayed, and we picked up our equipment, shouldered the packs and the sack from the cache, moved off to rejoin the ship.

"We've got what we came for, Hal! We've got to come back, pick up several of those bodies and the fragments of the vehicles—then leave for home! That should prove our point, if anything will. No use staying longer, we've got what we wanted. If they can't learn what they need to know about them by studying those fragments, nothing else would do them any good."

WE still didn't know how to get down that mighty wall of rock to the river level. Frank scowled when we came out of the "bushes," saw the big gleaming body of the ship afloat on the surface, with a gangplank run out to rock ledge.

Just as we reached the cliff edge, Ancil's little plane lifted from the water, spiraled up toward us. As he landed, Frank strode up to the little amphibious plane, angry as a hornet. "Can't you men obey orders? Here you are with the ship in plain sight, and with the plane in the air. Don't orders mean anything?"

Ancil grinned broadly, seemingly not minding Frank's bellowing.

"The women didn't want to wait while you crawled down that mile-high cliff by your fingernails. You see, the Vail cleared out after the scarpie attacked them. We watched the whole thing on Alinoa's antique T.V. set. If we waited till you made the descent the hard way, they might have returned. If you were in our place, with those ancient devices working to tell you what's going on, you'd have made the same decisions. When you're off the ship, Hendryks is next in command, and he's giving orders until you're back aboard. Now put your shirt back on, and we'll get aboard."

Once back aboard, Frank did not even speak to the women, ordered the crew to take aboard the little plane and submerge at once. After all, we couldn't have got down that cliff short of a day's hard climbing, or more.

Once safely back on the bottom of the river, Frank called a general meeting.

"Now, I want full particulars on what happened to the things in the black eggs who were trying to hunt us down. What you know about them with that *yarva* augmenter of Alinoa's, how they met disaster, everything."

Janey stood up, gave a report. I was very proud of her, and I could tell she knew she had done something pretty clever. "It wasn't really on purpose Frank, I didn't want to start anything. It just sort of grew out of a chance thing. Alinoa and I learned how to operate the relics she brought

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along; they are objects long held in veneration by her people—no one was allowed to tamper with them. But she threw custom to the winds because she had a very good idea of what they were. They are mental beam projectors, very good ones. She showed me how to operate it, and went to work on a different device that she didn't yet understand. I swung the beam around, listened to the Vail plan to capture you when you returned, and as I swung the beam to find you two and warn you, I accidentally caught a scarpein full in the receptor focus. He was thinking idly—a rather attractive murderer he is—thinking very pompous thoughts of his own kind. The beasts aren't any too smart, and I was busy thinking about you two and hating the Vail, hating their slimy appearance and their sneaky ways and their black egg-ships, and the beam transferred my thoughts right into the monster's head. He didn't know it wasn't his own thought, and after a few moments of absorbing my anger at the Vail, he steamed up and got mad too. I went on with the beam, found you two, told you to wait while I scouted the Vail positions so you could get back to the ship. I swung back to the cache, where the single Vail ship was waiting, just in time to see the others return from their search for you two. They all settled in a circle, began to confer on what to do next—and down out of the blue crashed the big scarpein, fighting mad! He smashed the egg-ships with his wing tips, gobbled down the insides like he was eating crabs, wiped out the whole party! I watched the scene goggle-eyed. It happened so swiftly they didn't have time to know what hit them. Those boys are real fighters—"

Frank cut her short. "All right, Janey, all right. I saw what happened. You accidentally told the scarpein to knock off the Vail, and he promptly did it. He thought it was his own idea, so far as you know. The wonder is that he could do it! It explains a lot. The Vail are afraid of a thing like that, which means they aren't much shakes as warriors."

Janey shook her head vigorously. "You're jumping to conclusions. Those eggs are only for travel. But they have fighting ships, and we don't know what they can do when they are ready for trouble."

Frank asked Janey: "Did they *know* we were still here?"

Janey nodded. "They knew. They thought of their expedition as a kind of lark, to fool around and learn what they could before they captured us. They expected to get a great kick out of fooling us, watching us, trapping us one by one when we were in no position to strike back. They love indirection. A frontal attack was the farthest thing from their minds. Incidentally, they not only fear the flying monster of the cliffs—he is taboo. They have a superstition against harming one of them. Which may explain how one could attack without being harmed—but I don't believe they had a chance to fight back. I don't know, for sure—it happened

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so quickly, and with one beam you can only focus attention on one mind at a time."

Alinoa, who had come up from the storage compartment where the antique mechanisms were now in use, cut in. "They saw our ship when we approached the planet. They saw our plane in flight. But they do not see with eyes; they see with a vibration they give off, feel the rebound. They have large resonators which give off beams of the vibration, with these they sensed our coming, and with these they tracked down our landing place. We have been very lucky. I would advise flight, if we can get away."

"The only reason I'm staying," agreed Frank, "is that I'm pretty sure they'd track us through space. I want to make sure our getaway is clean. It's too important they don't follow. Tomorrow, if there're none of them around, we'll go back and pick up the fragments from their ships."

As they talked, Alinoa's tribesmen trundled out the little cargo truck, on which reposed one of the relics of mysterious machinery. These half-naked savage looking warriors paid no attention to us, began to bolt the peculiar mechanisms to the duralumin girders in the hull wall.

Janey, watching them, exclaimed: "Be careful, that's four thousand years old!"

Frank asked: "Did they get a chance to report us to any large base of theirs, or are they a village, a small group?"

Alinoa gave him a sharp look. "Of course we've been reported. There'll be a fleet here for us soon, when these first do not return. They are not fools."

One by one the others made their way from the control chamber to other duties, and Frank stepped into our only gun blister, where a rapid firing recoilless cannon, of a type long used by bombers in air warfare, had been mounted. Somehow no one had expected to have to fight—the thing had been only a kind of precaution. It seemed we had all taken for granted that we would be the only ship in space.

I saw Frank checking the action of the cannon swivels, noted the magazines contained but a few shells, and taking the dolly left by the Fenirdren warriors, I trundled off to the hold to load up on cases of ammunition.

As I loaded the shells into the feed mechanism, I grumbled: "We can't take on a whole world of things like that! We could never kill them all."

Frank grinned over his shoulder. "Janey could! And with a big bat, only."

THE day dragged on, and all of us were busy, but I did not know what the others were doing, not being in touch via the co-ordinating influence of the *yarva* the others used constantly. Hence I was frightened, when I glanced into the ancient viewing device Janey was seated at, to see wheeling out over the river at a great height, a dozen or so great flying wings, in formation, swinging

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wing tip to wing tip round and round.

I struck my forehead with my palm as I grasped what she was doing. With the powers of the ancient instrument, she had learned to handle a whole squadron of flying beasts, and was doing training maneuvers with them so she could direct them into battle if needed.

Sagging into a pneumatic seat, exhausted, I could feel only a pity for the gallant efforts going on around me as we tried to ready ourselves for a struggle with forces so much beyond our strength. A powerful and sinister nation had singled us out for destruction or capture, lay hidden under the luxuriantly treed wilderness where nothing moved but an occasional wild thing overlooked by centuries of hunting.

Alinoa was seated close to Janey, bent over another of the devices, and Frank came out of the gun blister, stretching his long legs with a grimace. He bent over the discolored metal of the device before Alinoa. I guessed she had called him. He gave an exclamation of dismay, and I sprang to my feet to see what was there to frighten him.

If only these friends of mine did their talking with their mouths, so I could hear! The thing they were looking into was a ray device, very different from the thing Janey was manipulating. On it was a dim eight-sided screen, and on the screen could be seen the ghosts of trees, the surface of the river above us. The great cliffs nearby seemed made of fragile glass—I could see right through them. But in the center of the screen, at a distance of many miles, I guessed, could be made out the regularities of a pattern that a glance told me must be a city. Squares of white and black, and tiny moving dots flowing along in orderly lines. It was a city laid out in a wheel pattern, and near the rim of the wheel several clots of dots seemed to swarm at regular intervals. No details were visible, but from little upright glowing knobs at the side of the device I could hear the confused mental sound of a million alien minds thinking, a medley of messages impossible to untangle, but which altogether conveyed a distinct impression of menace. One knew those dots were intelligent beings, and one knew they were engaged in preparation for war. It was unmistakable. I blurted impatiently: "Why can't you ever tell me these things? I didn't even know you had this see-thru device that can make the solid walls of the cliffs turn into glass and show what is going on miles beyond. Is that a city of the leeches?"

Alinoa turned eyes tragic with despair upon mine, and nodded silently. Her graceful head, beautiful now in the dimness as a sculpture in rock crystal, bent again to the scene. But she murmured for my benefit: "They have terrible weapons, Hal. They can blast us out of the sky if we ascend, and they know almost where we wait. I can read their thought, and Janey can pick out single minds with the other device and read them at any distance. We cannot hope to escape."

Frank, like the rest, spoke only for

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my benefit, seemed to begrudge the effort. "They want to capture, not kill us, or they would have been after us before this. They mean to surround us when we take off, force us to land. Then they will extract every bit of information they can. If we don't give it willingly, they have some effective persuaders. We can't hope to keep silent, once in their hands."

The distant city was like an ant-hill at this magnification, seen as it was through intervening cliffs and hills. "We can't run. That's what they're waiting for." I mused. "Maybe an attack like Janey pulled on the guards at our cache would have similar results—"

Alinoa explained: "Too many of them. This is a world, swarming with life. There are thousands of these cities, but they have a custom of concealing them beneath the forests. Can't be seen from the sky, except with some device like this."

Frank was brooding over the scene of ominous activity. "I can't sight the cannon with that device, and without it I can't even see them. Are you sure they can shoot us down at this distance?"

Alinoa nodded. "They can—but the fall would kill us, and they want us alive."

"I'd like to try something. That ancient device is self-contained. Take hold of it, Hal, see if we can lift it together. If we can place it above the cannon in its mount, I can sight the cannon with it. The infra-red device I have is no good through the forest roof, even if we do ascend above the cliffs."

We took hold of the weird old device. It was only about the size of a modern sewing machine, seemingly fragile, with four ornate metal legs shaped like attenuated monkeys. But it must have been made of solid gold, to be so heavy. Grunting and heaving, we got it into the gun blister, bolted it into place on the gun mount so that it swung with the gun. The regular gun sight now showed its cross-hairs just at the bottom of the ancient screen. Alinoa readjusted the device in its new position while Frank and I hustled the husky warriors of Alinoa's retinue off to the cargo hold for more ammunition. We emptied the rapid firer's magazine, and the Fenir-dren returned with a dozen boxes labeled "smoke-shells," "tear-gas" and "incendaries". Frank cracked open the crates and began to reload the magazine with alternate shells from each box. The rapid-firer would now throw one of each consecutively.

On Frank's lean face was that detached, single-minded, almost demoniac expression I had always noted meant he was on the trail of something he considered really worthy of his talents. As before, confronted with what Frank considered a "quarry," I felt only complete helplessness and a certainty that my partner was a madman to attack something so much more powerful than himself. But there was no stopping him. Habit kept me busily aiding him in his madness. He muttered: "We'll see how they like this stuff! If there's any-

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thing inflammable there, they'll be busy for awhile, anyway."

As he slipped into the bucket seat of the rapid-firer, he gave Holderness a glance, and Holderness lifted the ship up out of the water. With just the anti-gravs working, we drifted upward. Above the cliffs the wind took us like a balloon, flung us westward.

Frank began firing almost at once. There were several big ovoid shapes approaching us in the distant sky, but he ignored them. In the screen the shells traced long arcs of descent, arcs that ended near the center of the hidden city far down in the valley.

The shell bursts were disappointingly small at this distance, little sun-points of fire at first, then I realized that the smoke and the gas did not register on the penetrative eye of the Fenir-dren device.

One result was instantly apparent. The moving hordes of dots about the great ovoid shapes broke up and squads of them made off toward the center of the city. Here and there the flicker of flames could be seen faintly, and a great tree fell with a shattered trunk, flames wreathing the mighty boughs.

With systematic precision Frank bracketed the whole area, vast as it was. He put a shell within each dark square below. Somehow he knew the light squares were open spaces, perhaps parks. I picked up a pair of field glasses, moved to the curved view-panes set in the bow, focused on the cloud of smoke billowing up over the distant tree tops. There was little to be seen but the regular shell bursts founting new plumes of white smoke upward, the waving flames and slowly spreading and settling clouds of gas. But the distant ships in the sky were moving in on us rapidly. At intervals of several seconds a new dark flying shape shot upward out of the rolling smoke cloud, arrowed toward us. We would soon be the center of an attacking mass of enemy ships. I could only surmise the consternation the sudden attack on their city by a single invading ship might be causing the leech-like creatures.

Watching the ships nearing us, I quailed as I saw lancing out toward us fiery rays—or tracer paths of missiles—but heard or felt no impact. Even as they began to fire, a dozen great rippling shapes dived on them from above, crashed into the black oval egg-like things, then pinwheeled off from the impact in staggering flight. The vail battle-craft didn't do much better—four or five crashed downward in long uneven gliding falls, while the others wheeled and began to fire on the attacking brutes from the cliffs. I could hear Janey shrilly crying out: "Give it to them, Scarpies" and felt an inner exulting pride that she could prove so completely resourceful under the circumstances.

For some reason the attacking craft were reluctant to battle the Scarpein creatures. They spun about, firing upon the wheeling mottled shapes above them, but seemed to do no damage. It was later I learned the details about the superstition of the

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Vail which made the Scarpein near-sacred, in that it was supposed to be a kind of temporary dwelling place for their souls after death. But in truth the flying wings must have made an utterly impossible target, their batlike flight so swift and so variable, constantly shifting and turning.

As the attacking craft continued to pinwheel and dogfight with the flying monsters, Janey got up from her mysterious mechanism, moved to another close by. I walked over beside her, found her busy with a distinctly different device, her impish Irish face deadly serious. I squeezed her shoulder and she flipped a hand to me, went on concentrating upon the metal box. It was studded with tiny glowing opals which twinkled in constantly changing patterns, as if lit from within.

"Can you tell me something . . .?" I entreated.

She gave me a glance of pure desperation, did not answer for a long minute, suddenly leaned back with a sigh of relief. "You almost caused our death, you egg-head!" she flung at me. "Can't you ever learn that mental work is important? This is a *yarva* augmentor, of a different type than the other, with a two-way effect. I had it tuned to the Vail leader. He was deciding whether to dispatch the fleet to battle us in the sky, or to order his entire forces to get busy putting out the fires. They're badly disorganized, having never been attacked on their home grounds before. The gas is new to them, though the smoke doesn't bother them. They see with their skin. It's very sensitive, and the gas is driving them simply nuts. Their food supply, a hundred thousand or more humans imported from Nadar, are housed in great wooden barracks, half of which are afire. I managed to suggest it was more important to rescue their food than to chase an unknown single enemy who was certain to get away anyway. I also kept him from ordering his fort weapons to fire, they have terrific range and could reach us, but he decided it would give away their position to us, thanks to me and the *yarva* augmentor. I've got to watch him every instant, I can keep him thinking whatever I want with this thing, and I've got to keep the Scarpies from deciding to get out of here and go home. With both jobs on my hands, you come up for a bit of conversation. Please go peddle your papers. Let me alone, I'll tell you about it later."

She turned back to the apparently silent and useless machine. I shambled off, utterly embarrassed. The little wife was always a jump ahead with her telepathy, and it always rankled. I got busy with the Fenirdren braves bringing up a fresh supply of shells, but Frank came out of the blister as we arrived.

"All hands in their seats for full acceleration."

I gathered Janey had decided it was time to run, and that Frank thought it his own idea.

But did they head for outer space and safety? Not Janey, not Frank.

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They had something else in mind, they weren't letting our friends below off so easy. Over on the dark Side of Sira, they plunged into the center of another great river, glided upstream, let the ship settle to the bottom like a stone.

There we lay for three days. To all my questions these irritating companions of mine only gave sly grins, grunts, or chuckles of anticipation, but not a word did they tell me. Embarrassed as I had been last time I questioned my wife, I held my peace, occupied myself with a set of Darwin's *Origin of Species,* speculating as I read what the old explorer would have written if he could have seen Sira and her intelligent leeches.

Coming out of my self-enforced solitude, I found that the whole crew were gathered about Janey at her jeweled box, and that a cable now joined the other two somewhat similar devices, at each of which sat Frank and Alinoa.

No one talked to me. They all had the rapt and distant expressions of *yarva* concentration on their faces. I stalked grumpily into the gun blister and parked on the bucket seat, fiddling with the control grips of the penetrative eye device. Swinging the whole gun almost vertical. I was able to see above the surface of the water.

At first the wheeling shadows overhead meant to me the Vail had at last focused an attack on us, knew exactly where we were. But an instant's focusing brought one of the wheeling winged shapes close, and I gasped, nearly firing the gun in my sudden surprise.

Janey and the rest must have routed out every Scarpein on this side the planet. There were hundreds, maybe thousands, circling above us in apparently disciplined formations. By tens, by scores, and by fifties—like airplanes flying formation in some gigantic airshow—the living flying wings wheeled, dived, or spiraled upward. I gathered the whole plan from the sight. The whole telepathic group were busy training the monsters for battle, expected to attack the Vail with them. But would it work a second time? Wouldn't they be ready for them, now that they knew their single invader could use the flying monsters against them?

I knew the Vail forces must have ransacked the whole planet in a search for us. I left the gun blister, went back to the mess for some coffee. Frank came in and sat down beside me, fingers drumming nervously as he eyed me, waiting for an outburst. I merely asked quietly: "When those things give up searching for us, are we going to lam out of here or stir them up again? No matter how many of your flying monsters you throw at them, you can't *defeat* them! I don't think anybody is looking at this thing sensibly."

"I'm putting it to a vote, Hal. Trouble is, we can't possibly steal away unseen. They're out for our blood. We figure our best chance is to scare the pants off them, so they'll leave us alone. If we take off into space, we'll be seen in the upper air. Our jets will register on their listen-

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ing devices. They'll follow, perhaps so far away we'd never know till we'd shown them the route home. That's actually why they're waiting for us to run—so we will betray our people. They could have blasted us out of the sky when I attacked their city. All it did was give away our strength. Truth is, I don't know what to do to keep them from following us. We could take to space, dodge around to try to shake them. But we'd never know for sure if we had or not. And we don't have fuel for the long voyages it would take to make sure. We've either got to go almost directly back, or find fuel. And I don't think we can find the kind of fuel we've got to have short of an Earth atomics plant."

I put in hopefully: "Your control of these Scarpein monsters is a good stunt, but they certainly couldn't deal the Vail a knockout! And nothing short of extermination is going to do us much good. We don't even know if this is their only planet, or just a small outpost of a much larger nation."

Frank scowled, trying to see an answer to our enigma. "No single ship, equipped like ours, can knock them out. The whole strength of Earth, specially prepared for it, might not be able to do it. We don't know! That's why I'm hanging around—to learn, from reading their minds, just what it will take to wipe them out. Then we will try to shake them off with speed in space. But we've got to know their speed, first."

"Doesn't *yarva* give you everything you need to know?"

He shook his head. "Their ovoids, and their forts as well, are impervious to the *yarva* vibrants. We don't even know if they are insulated against it purposefully, or accidentally by some property of the hull material. We have only read a few of their important minds when we got them in focus while they were outside their insulating shells. Janey had the leader for awhile during our first battle, but only because he was out on an observation platform watching us through a big telescope they have. Not a lens telescope, you know, but a kind of radar device which bounces back vibrations that act to them as light."

I fixed Frank with a beseeching eye, said firmly: "I believe the best chance our people have is for us to give the Vail the slip and go back home. Even if they followed and learned where Earth is, it would take them so time to get ready for an invasion."

Frank clenched a fist, struck the table, his brows clenched in mental turmoil. "Logically you're right, Hal. But when did men listen to logic? If we went back, told Earth we were about to be attacked by an alien race, they wouldn't even listen to us! Our civilization does not operate on logical lines. Everything from our arrival on would depend upon perfect publicity, perfect understanding, complete acceptance of our evidence. We'd never get it! They'd laugh us off, we'd get second page publicity while the front page was taken up by some new

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murder case. We would have to have a lot of luck to get the army and the congress and senate to act on our information. Meanwhile, while the wheels ground out red tape on Earth, the Vail would get ready and attack."

"I don't know," I growled. "Photos should prove our story. We have plenty."

"They'd insist we faked them, were trying to get publicity. Even if they took everything we told them as gospel, nothing effective would be done about preparation. They'd put it off till too late. They always do."

I stood up. "We can't do anything else but run, Frank! If you attack them with your flying devil fish, you'll only give them an interesting scuffle while they pin you down and take you alive. That means our lives, spent here as captives of a bunch of leeches, and the certain destruction of Earth. We have got to run now!"

Alinoa came into the little mess, looking as usual the green goddess, still wearing her savage jewels and feathers in preference to Earth style garb. For her, it was right. The slight transparent hand-painted Fenir-dren sarong about her hips, the gaudy head-dress of plumes, the bangles and bracelets of huge antique gems, were her everyday attire. She was the chosen of her people, their daughter of the stars. Earth fashions would have only destroyed her ancient and wonderful background, made her but another woman intent upon kitchen and child and chatter. She poured herself coffee, her hand movements as always graceful, like a ritual dance rather than mere utility. Reading our thoughts, she spoke aloud for my benefit.

"We are not so much at their mercy as you think, Hal Worran. They do not have a knowledge of our *yarva*. We can control their minds whenever they are outside their ships. And when we step up our devices' power by pooling our minds and attaching the devices as a battery, we can reach inside their ships and control even the ships' movements. We can cause them to dash to the ground or into the cliffs. It might be best to keep up a steady destruction of the things, until we have so cowed them they will never follow us—until they will fear to take the air, but will hide from us wherever they may."

Frank looked at her, and I wished for the ten thousandth time I could hear their thought-exchange. From that beauty of companionship on their faces, I knew it must be very fine to love another with the mind open and visible to the other.

Frank spoke again, after a long silence. "We do not know enough about their skills, their weapons, their science. We are not even sure if they experiment with telepathic devices or not. We must know positively what they possess to use against our earth's forces. We are really an investigative force, a spy ship, if you will. We must fulfill our obligations to our own."

"So you set their city afire," I grumbled. It was nothing but a big circle of barracks where they keep slaves, a kind of stock farm for their human cattle. Soon, you will be up

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against their assembled forces—and you can't win, can't escape, will only die. I say get out now."

Alinoa made an impatient mouth, waved her hands in those ultra-expressive gestures. "I would like to eliminate them from our future, some way. I want to voyage on and on among the stars, searching out the great truths men need to know. Let us wait a little while. Something might occur which will betray them into our hands, or show them to be harmless to Earth's future. We do not know enough to run away, yet."

SO began a campaign of strange hiding for our star ship. During the day the ancient mind control devices caused the Vail to crash their ships into each other or into the ground. Or a great Scarpein flying mammal would crush down from a great height upon one of the cruising search ships, smashing the hull and destroying itself as well as the enemy. As soon as night fell, the star ship would lift out of the water and glide away on the silent anti-gravs, just above the forest roof, to descend hundreds of miles away into the river again. That way we knew the pattern of the "accidents" would not give away our hiding place.

Just how our campaign of guerilla harassment might have turned out with better luck, I have often wondered. But my most ominous predictions came true. As we lifted in the early night dark from the river, there was a soundless, numbing flash, the sensation of falling, a terrible pain of weird vibration running through all my nerves. The shock of striking the water was hardly felt, for my limbs were utterly paralyzed by the strange ray that had struck at us.

When I again saw light, it was through the bars of a window. I sat up, to find myself naked. I knew at once what had occurred, that my objections to our plans had been only too correct. Somehow they had located the star ship by instrument, remained beyond our detection until they could fire upon us with some paralyzing radiation. I looked about stupidly. My head was very sluggish, my skin dry and irritated as if a flame had swept lightly over me.

I was within a roughly built prison cell. I could see rows of similar cells down a corridor, through the metal barred door. Sitting or lying about were four other humans. A glance identified them as the emotionless creatures of Nadar. They stared at me, a kind of animal awareness unconnected with thought. They made no move, no words came from their slack mouths. I returned their stares, waiting for circumstances to give me a lead, a handle for my mind to grasp. I might as well have been imprisoned with four clothing store dummies, for all the response they gave to my tentative attempts to communicate. An hour of this went by, and I exploded, in Fenir-dren tongue, knowing they must recognize some of the words, for Alinoa has conversed with them. "For God's sake, say something! Are you lost to humanity? Are your minds slave

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as well as your bodies? Where is my wife and my friends?"

There was no answer or movement for a good ten minutes. Their rather beautiful dark eyes goggled softly at each other and at me. Finally one of them whispered in a shy, frightened sibilance, hardly audible. "This is the ante-chamber of the Gods! Can you not be patient until the great ones summon you?"

I snorted, seeing in them the ultimate fulfillment of all the "pie-in-the-sky" teachings I had ever heard. Here they were waiting for a race of leeches to call them to a blood-sucking, and they were still believing as they were taught, that this ugly fate was the best of all possible things. "The Vail are not gods. They are leeches who must have your living blood for food. Do you really believe you are here for another reason than to feed the Vail with your life's blood?

All four graceful empty heads turned and looked about fearfully, and the one who had spoken first turned his back on me and my blasphemy. But another of them, a woman, beautifully slim and well shaped, yet somehow sexless, spoke to me gently in a voice strange because it was empty of womanhood, the voice of a neuter: "Do you not believe in the transfiguration? Do you think your life is not but a preparation for the greater life to come?"

I did not answer, but wept inwardly to find a people so darkened and so put-upon as to believe that their evil destroyers were benevolent Gods.

She came to my side, seating herself and peering mournfully into my eyes. I did not move or speak, and after a time she whispered very softly into my ear: "Your companions are in other cells, separated from each other. They are without clothing like yourself, waiting like you for the summons to the transfiguration. Though it is accepted belief that this is a good fate, I know far better. If we seem stupid, there is a purpose in it. For only the spirited and intelligent among us are destroyed. If we act very meek and agreeable, we are given work instead of death. The stronger and wiser we appear, the more certain it is that we become blood cows, to be bled until at last we die of it. Do you understand?"

Surprised at this intelligent, connected speech from the seeming moron, words poured out of me clumsily in the unfamiliar Fenir-dren phrases which I knew only sketchily.

She leaned even closer, pressing her lips to my ear. "I can help you. But at a price. I was placed here to question you, though I resolved not to do so. If you want to fool them, tell me a great many lies, that I may pass them on to the Vail. Even though they breed us like cattle, raise us like mushrooms, still we are human, and more than they. I will tell them you are willing to work with them, willing to lead them back to your world, to help defeat your people. I will tell them you were driven out in your starship, and you hate your people, want them all to become slaves to the Vail. Then you can lead them astray

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in the endless paths of the sky, so that they can never return. Or you can perhaps destroy them, in some artful way they would never expect. What do you say to that?"

Shaken to the heels by the discovery that this apparently empty vessel was instead full of wisdom and of vitriol for her conquerors, I could only gaze at her in sudden admiration. She took my hand gently, stroking it, apparently enjoying the sensation. Then she began to speak aloud, so loudly that I am sure some listener in the corridor was there to hear, and she meant him to hear. "Ah, you are friend, and not an enemy! I am glad to know you! The nights are long and cold and empty here without friends. Together we can pass the time pleasantly, for what else is there for such as we? What but love until we greet the great ones in the greater love beyond?"

Taking my cue from her, and wondering a little as to why I had assumed she was sexless, I raised my voice, the Fenir-dren words clumsy in my mouth, stumbling wildly in my throat. My face was red with embarrassment that Frank or Janey might be near to hear, but it was no time for quibbling over Earth-type morals. I said—loudly: "What better can there be for us, truly? You are wise, stranger from Nadar. Wiser than I dreamed."

We went on, speaking obliquely and our colloquy brought results rapidly.

It was perhaps an hour after the graceful, bogus moron (whose name was Ter-lin, or "Morn-mist" in the Fenir-dren) had propositioned me that the summons came. My knees were knocking together as the guard, a Nadarine, led us down the stone paved corridor. My eyes darted from face to face as I passed along the cells, the helpless, seemingly mindless wretches waiting there to become the monstrous leeches' food, looking at them guiltily hoping not to have to face one of the others from the ship.

My mind was still badly fuddled from the humbing vibration that had knocked us out, or I would have realized that the telepaths from my ship would be way ahead of me in understanding the angles of the situation. But I saw none of them, only the poor naked bodies of the Nadarines, like rows of beautiful dummies awaiting dismantling.

My greatest fear was the sudden actuality facing me, the imminence of the horror of confronting one of the Vail as another thinking creature, of talking with them as an ally against Earth, of actually seeing an intelligent leech at close quarters. That it was a thing big enough to take all the blood from my body and look for more was perhaps the most dominant thought in my head. My nervousness conveyed itself to the gentle seeming Ter-lin, and her great dark eyes became pools of fear. Her little hand trembled in mine.

I whispered. "Don't worry, Ter-lin, they're only worms after all—" and she broke into giggles as we rounded the corner on the heels of the Nadarine guard. We found ourselves

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standing before a room full of the weird conquerors, and it took all I had to stand straight and silent instead of screaming and trying to escape.

The things were of indeterminate height, featureless. Their bodies could stretch out elastically to any height from four to ten feet of more. They did not sit—there were no chairs—but several of them lay on low benches, coiled into near-perfect spheres, like ribbed medicine balls. Others stood, the lower quarter of them on the stone-flagged floor, the rest undulating slowly, looking like great puff-adders about to strike. They were a dull brown, mottled with vivid red, and gray spots in regular rows and groups seemed to mark the nerve endings which gave their nervous system its messages. I gathered that the ribbed underparts, which became their front when thus erect, contained many little mouths, for greedy little sucking sounds came from their whole frontal curve as they seemed to bow to us. There were no eyes, no nose, no mouth, no ears. For hands there were the irregular waving projections at the top quarter of their length, a kind of rubbery fringe like many living rubber bands dangling, nervously expanding and contracting. I saw at once that they were all possessed of great dexterity and obvious strength.

I stood erect, waiting some cue, while my whole body shivered in hate, in anger at myself, and my stomach slowly retched and strained to vomit out my disgust. Ter-lin gave a low salaam, then went to one knee, but I could not bring myself to do the same. I waited, eyeing them, struggling hard for self control, while Ter-lin spoke to them in a low voice, a swift patter of the peculiar Fenir-dren containing many differences from the Venusian form I had learned from Alinoa. As nearly as I could follow her, she said: "This one of the venomous strangers tells me he is outcast and hated of his own people. He holds no love for them, would enjoy seeing them before the might of the Vail. He would be very glad to have me for a companion, and considers my body a good price for his alliance. He asks that you give me the necessary injections of vital fluid to return my fertility to me. If you do this, and show that you mean to deal honorably by him, he will lead you to the conquest of his world, asking only for a small city to be placed under his governorship when the conquest is complete. He is very glad and proud to be offered this opportunity of revenge upon his hated people, who have done him great injury."

I saw now that Ter-lin was playing her own little game for the stakes most dear to her, that she knew they had the power of taking away her sex or of returning it to her, that this mutilation was customary with all the prisoners, returned only as a reward for services rendered. I gathered that the Vail were masters of a medical science beyond Earth's in many ways.

One of them twisted, stretched out

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along the wall, to unroll a map. I recognized it as a projection of the heavens as seen from Sira. But on it I could not have indicated the approximate position of Earth if I had wanted to. It was far too confusing. I had paid little attention to the navigation of our ship, and could not pick out the constellation of which our sun made one star, let alone pick out the star itself. I stood stupidly examining the skillfully executed chart for some written sign to get my bearings before I found myself staring at the point that was our own sun, to my eyes, though probably it was not even remotely near it. In fear that I had inadvertently indicated the correct point, I reached out and put my finger upon a star on the far side of the chart.

There was a flurry of finger waving, a twiddle ran through every finger fringe in the room. I stood there, naked and ashamed and quite unconscious of anything now but my own discomfort. The guard who had brought me suddenly reappeared from the outer hall, bearing across his arm garments similar to his own. It was a knee length tunic, a leather belt, leg wrappings of soft leather, sandals and several insignia which I suppose corresponded to a badge on an Earth guard's outfit. I was grateful for the diversion, and Ter-lin busied herself wrapping the bindings around my legs, slipping on the sandals, adjusting the belt. As she finished, I found myself examining her graceful young nude body with too great attention. I flushed and looked away from her soft dark gaze. I think it was this slight display of emotion which convinced them. There was a sudden co-incident agitation of that multitude of elastic fingers about us, and immediately one of the creatures glided up to Ter-lin and made a sign before her face. A sudden hope sprang like a light across her young, lovely face, a lifting of the gray pathetic emptiness, and she followed the undulant gliding horror from the room without a glance at me.

After a few minutes, they signed to my guard, who returned me to a cell but a few doors down the corridor.

I relaxed in my new quarters, awaiting what the future might bring. It brought, presently, the slim and beautiful Ter-lin. I looked at her, astounded. She had been revivified by some remarkable treatment. Now, instead of seeming a sexless and uninteresting young female without a brain or an emotion, her body exuded sex appeal and sparkling vitality.

I was entranced by her appearance. She had decked herself out in jewels, jewels I assumed given her from hoards the Vail had taken from captured enemy cities. She wore a gauzy pair of pantaloons topped by a girdle of the gems. She seemed an odalisque out of the Arabian nights to me, born for love. She embraced me with every evidence of overwhelming joy, while the guard stood frowning upon us from the doorway. But as he backed out and locked us in, she whispered: "I fear your friends have betrayed you! Two of them have given an identical answer, and it is

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not true that it is the same as yours. None of them gave the same answer as you."

I was taken aback for an instant, for I was sure that some of the men must have been similarly importuned to play traitor,-and that two of them must have yielded. I cudgled my wits, knowing I would get torture unless I could discredit the identical tale told by two others. I raised my head from Ter-lin's embrace, spoke loudly: "You are foolish; they have managed to pass word to each other in some manner. This is a trick on their parts. They are sending the Vail to their death against a powerful race of war-like monsters! Don't they understand? I meant to lead them aright, now I suppose they will not believe me because none of the others told them the same location."

Ter-lin, neither knowing nor caring if this was the truth or but another lie, just so death could be put a little farther away, seconded my attempt with: "I knew you would not be dishonest! None of the others made friends with the Nadar who work for the Vail. We must explain to our kind masters this trick—"

The listening guard at once hurried off. We knew he went to report the supposedly inadvertent disclosure, caring little about the real truth, being only glad to have something important to carry them.

If I had known what my stupid wit had caused, I would have torn out my tongue.

The Vail selected Alinoa as their first subject for torture. They had learned she was the mate of Farar, and had the glass-woman and Farar brought into their "chamber of the question," expecting that Farar would tell the truth to save his woman pain.

When Farar entered the weird place, a long white-walled room where the Vail disposed of worn-out blood donors and aged servants, a kind of abbattoir with a rank odor of unclean decay, he glanced about at the alien gadgets and strange mechanical contrivances arranged along the walls. He saw at once that his Alinoa was already there, strapped to a high table, while over her stood three of the undulant Vail bearing a variety of scalpel-like instruments in their fringe of fingers. The interpreter, a burly blank-faced Nadarine, immediately harangued him.

"If you wish your mate left in health and unharmed, you will answer my Lord's questions honestly. Otherwise her torments will be many and very long. The medical wizardry of the Vail can keep her body alive long after death would naturally have claimed her. Now we want the details of the strength of your people, their weapons, their ships, the size and nature of their planet. We already know where it is located.

Frank, his face wet with sudden anguished sweat at sight of Alinoa threatened, ground his teeth together in a terrible rage. Grim as a skeleton, he asked: "You want their numbers, or their comparative strength? In numbers they are as the sands of the desert, and in powers of destruc-

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tion far superior to yourself, judging by my experience with you. I have shown you with my own little space craft, you stand no chance against them. You had better release that woman or certain revenge will fall upon you."

There before the foul, undulating forms of the Vail, Alinoa and Frank were in full mental contact, each reassuring, each affirming to the other that no matter what occurred, the location of Earth must not be disclosed. For the possibility of such disaster as had struck them had been considered before they left Venus, and they had solemnly sworn to die before betraying Earth to a greater power.

They had torn from Alinoa's lovely translucent body the few barbaric adornments and the decorative sari-like garment she wore. She was stretched out painfully upon the hard white stone of the table, her wrists, ankles and waist lashed down with leather thongs. She could move only her head, and her great yellow eyes fixed Frank's in a gaze of utter devotion, as she mentally strove to convince him that her fate must not be weighed against the future of Earth and Venus peoples.

Frank had no intention of telling the Vail anything he could avoid, but like myself, he decided to seem to co-operate, hoping that later on opportunity to escape might present itself. So he bellowed in his own limited Fenir-dren, which he knew the Nadarine interpreter could hardly make out: "I don't understand this treatment! We all stand ready to lead you to the conquest of our people, for we are outcasts of our own race. Now release my woman, and I will tell you whatever you wish to know."

But the Vail interrogators had orders to make quite certain which was the truth, my claim or the others'. Frank had no way of knowing what had been told them, as the Vail thought was very difficult to read, couched in unfamiliar symbols and concepts. They unrolled a similar map to that he had seen before, repeated the statement they knew where Earth was located, asked him to verify it. Frank and Alinoa both searched the minds of the questioners frantically, to learn exactly what answers would please them most without really telling them anything. Alinoa managed to extract from the queer Vail thought the suspicion of danger for themselves in that area they wished confirmed. She managed to speak before Frank: "I will tell you! You need not bother my husband with my torments. In that area near Betelgeuse lies a powerful group of warring nations, who fight among themselves until others try to attack, then join forces against them. They have destroyed every alien ship who approached them. It would be madness for you to go there. Someone has misled you."

Frank nodded, trusting Alinoa's sensitivity to lead her aright. He had been studying the rubbery, elastic bodies of the creatures standing over her, noting their method of conversing by signs, trying to estimate their possible powers in a hand-to-hand

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struggle. He could only assume that they were stronger singly than any human, and far more indestructible. There seemed no weak point where a blow would harm them, but only an attempt would prove the point. He longed to make that attempt, but the fear of causing disaster to his companions and his wife held him back. He realized the Vail were very well acquainted with the physical structure of the human, having fed on them for centuries, probably for many thousand of years. He decided that any physical assault would be idiotic, and held his tongue and his temper, letting Alinoa do the talking. Her confirmation of my statement of the existence of one or more great powers capable of destroying them had aroused their caution. They wanted desperately to learn which of these locations was in truth that of the dread power whose existence they began to accept as fact. Quite abruptly they released Alinoa from her painful lashings, and the poor woman was set on her feet, naked and trembling, while Farar raged inwardly at her humiliation.

My desertion of the others for the society of the pretty Nadarine girl had been the subject of the gossip of the prison. The dull waiting slaves could speak of little but the good fortune of the Earth prisoner who had escaped the general fate and been given a young mate as reward. Janey eventually *yarva'd* the whole story from the minds about her, and was both pitifully hurt and terribly angry. She could not understand how her Hal had gotten himself into such a position with no effort on his part. She concluded that I had gone stark mad. In a kind of desperation she turned her attention to her own male companions, knowing why they were there, and what they offered. Immediately one smooth-cheeked youngster made himself agreeable. The Vail had learned their lesson from Ter-lin's original lack of sex appeal, had revitalized this youth before setting him to learn Janey's weak points. Janey found him appealing, spent some hours learning to converse with him in the difficult Nadarine, in order not to give away the fact she could read every thought in his head.

The Nadarine opened his rather foolish approach with: "You are very beautiful. I would wish I could be your mate."

Janey simpered, having before her a simple son of a system designed to give no mind a chance to develop. "I already have a mate, and you are too young and inexperienced. However you are nice to look at. But it is stupid to talk of such things, we have so short a time to live."

The Nadarine was immediately desperate, seeing his own chance to escape the general fate slip away. "But there is a way to live! If you will but do as I advise, the Vail will let you live, and allow you to have me for a mate. Your former mate has already accepted this offer from the Vail, why should you hesitate?"

Janey shrugged her naked shoulders, tossed a careless palm to indicate her utter disregard for life. "Why

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should I hesitate? I can give you many answers to that one! Answers these animated rubber mats never conceived in their brightest dreams. But go on, I'm interested for reasons beyond your eyes."

The Nadarine looked puzzled, but hurried on, afraid to lose her attention. "All that would be required of you is verification of the information drawn from the others, so that we may know who tells the truth and who lies. This effort you would never miss, and what could do you any good once you are dead? You need never know the fate of your people . . ."

Janey nodded. "Of course, I need never know anything, even when they ask me where there are more nice plump females like myself, so nice and juicy and full of good rich blood. I understand fully! You can tell them for me that all they'll ever learn I've already told them. But what more can they ask?"

The young Nadarine shook his head sadly. "They can ask endless questions, with terrible pain for each wrong answer, until you are quite exhausted. Then, not satisfied, they will give you a terrific stimulant and start over, and when they are through drugging you, you will tell them everything anyway. It is better to get some reward for telling."

"Reward?" asked Janey absently, hardly listening.

"Yes, instead of screaming for a lifetime of agony in one of their pain cells, you can spend your time with me in a breeding quarter, where the prisoners have nothing to do but make love and be waited on by slaves. It is not a bad way to live, and you do not have to raise your own children, they do it for you. They have both methods of getting children, you know, the natural and the energized, stimulated method. They are offering you the former. If you do not do what they ask, they may condemn you to the latter, which is not at all pleasant."

Janey only snorted. "I'm already married, little man."

The Nadarine was nonplussed at her ignorance. "But they don't trust your mate, and they do trust me. I have never deceived them. It would be better for you if you talked to them through me. They can save you from much. For instance . . ."

Janey changed the subject. "How is it the others of your race seem like animals, without sex or animation? They move like contented cows, amiably awaiting the blood-stalls or whatever you call the place where they take your blood? Yet you are quite lively and very obviously virile?"

The Nadarine explained at length. "My people have long been the property of the Vail. We are born in great nurseries, where the mothers are a kind of incubator. We never know our parents. The breeders are usually just organs, removed from the parents' bodies and cultured in great glass globes. The child is not grown naturally within the mother's body. We never are given sex; our feeding and rearing removes the sexual energies. But they have the power to revivify a young person by injections,

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awaken sex within them."

Janey listened with an expression of amazement, though she knew all this from her visit to Nadar. Mockingly she commented: "What an admirable way to bear children. They take a woman and by strange treatments make her able to give birth every day —every hour, perhaps? I don't understand, but it is certainly an improvement over the old fashioned methods. However, what you tell me of the culture of their organs tells me they don't enjoy the process, or even live to see their own children born."

"That is not their only way of getting young. They can take a woman and so feed her that she becomes enlarged, and gives off tiny children in a steady stream, like insect eggs, which are them placed in incubator batteries and raised to life size. But the children are not so vigorous as the natural kind, nor so long-lived."

Janey shook her head. "They are certainly a generous, ingenius, likeable lot, the Vail. But I'm sorry it is not interesting to me, for I am of a different race, and can't work up any enthusiasm for a pitiful object like yourself."

The Nadarine "youth," seeing his hopes for life vanish, began to moan pitifully, and tears came pouring down his cheeks. "A living woman, a natural woman, how can you refuse. Does not nature drive you into my arms? Are you then not a woman, but only like I was formerly, a sexless being?"

Janey drew away from his weeping face: "You have much to learn of women, my friend, before you attempt to criticize me. You had better find other instruction. However, you can tell your kind masters that I am considering their proposition, and that I think very highly of you, that I have never met quite so remarkable a mutton-head in my whole life. Your very masculine attractions, though so new, are still attractions. Tell them that I consider you not yet a man; that you must have further treatment before my better nature succumbs before the lure of your body, and I can consider the betrayal of my world a small price to pay for your services. Then they will give you even more of the medicine that has awakened you to normal life. Meanwhile, I will have time to think what I must do."

As the downcast youth got to his feet to signal the guard that he had a message for his masters, Janey quite suddenly realized that her Hal had pretended to fall for their deal, and had been given quarters with some young re-sexed female. Angry again at the picture that aroused in her mind, she suddenly exclaimed: "I'll teach him a lesson! He thinks its all right, any sacrifice for his country, and all that. Well enough! Come back here, you young sprig of foolishness, we've got some talking to do."

The young Nadarine turned away from the door where he was trying to get the somnolent guard's attention, to throw himself at her feet in an attitude of supplication. Like a child, his eyes were filled with tears, and his expression doleful. Janey sniffed

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scornfully, then patted his head with one hand lightly. "You can tell your masters I'll do what they wish, that I'm desperately in love with you. That they can rely on me if they give us decent treatment."

After Frank and Alinoa had been spared, and had pretended to disclose the location of their home world, their captors had given them quarters similar to mine to await "the day of the return." For the Vail had dispatched scout ships to examine the areas indicated by their captives, and if they lied, there were other ways of getting information. They were in no hurry, and the end of their captives would in any case be the same, but they had to keep them in a sane condition until they were sure they could tell no more. The separate cells they had given the three couples were to the Vail but the pens where they kept their "choice" cattle. But every day that passed was to the prisoners a day wasted, in which they had been able to do nothing but wait for their end, and Farar became a pacing panther, his eyes glaring a little madly, his feet never still.

A day of great interest in the succession of empty weeks was the arrival of a new batch of slaves from Nadar. They watched the young creatures herded into their pens with interest keened by weeks of monotony.

But one of them was more than just a slave. As the night drew on, and the prison became but a quiet shadowed sleeping pile of corridors and cells, in which the somnolent guards slept fitfully at their posts, Frank heard a scratching at his door. He knew the door was locked from the outside, and that there was no way he could open it. But he knelt against the door, his ear pressed to the planks, heard a faint whisper. "I bring you greetings from the Honored Manstril, once Lord of Nadar, now puppet ruler. He sends you a gift. I will place it in your food receptacle. Handle it carefully . . ."

Then the unknown messenger from the other world was gone, soundlessly, back to the pen from which he had stolen. Frank pulled in the tray in the slot in the door, and on it was a little metal object. He picked it up. It fitted snugly in his hand, and a little lever jutted out where his index finger could press it. If it was not some weapon the old ruler had managed to conceal and save for an emergency, it had all the appearance of a weapon. Examining it closely, he could find no orifice, no muzzle. It was a little cone with a curved projection which fitted the palm. Curiously he placed it against the metal door fastening, a cumbersome lock. He pressed the trigger, there was a soundless vibration. Looking at the point where the cone touched the metal, Frank found the whole thing shivered into dust, the door swinging free to his hand. He turned back, awakened Alinoa, explained what had occurred.

"I still don't know if the thing is a weapon or a tool, and I won't know till I try it on human flesh. I want you to steal off, try to find where they have taken our ship. I will wait till

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you are safely out of sight five or ten minutes. Then I'll try it on the guard."

Alinoa silently slipped off past the sleeping guard. When he stirred, mumbled, awakened and sprang to his feet, Frank was standing directly behind him. He pressed the little cone to the man's back, triggered the unknown device. A smell of burning flesh nauseated him. The guard slumped to the floor. He carried no weapon, but Frank took the keys from his belt, and the heavy whip which was his badge of office.

Standing there over the dead man, Frank decided to put on his badge. It might get him past any of the Vail he might meet. Then he hurried after Alinoa. He had no idea how to find the others of his party, nor even whether they were in the same building, as the telepathic powers he and Alinoa relied upon had for days been unable to contact the others. They had assumed they were the only ones left in the building, that the others had been removed to some other place. But he had seen Ancil and Hendryks led into a cell near at hand, and he tried the keys in the lock of this door, hoping they might still be there, and wanting to save the strange energies in his weapon. Inside, he found his two friends asleep, but they were unable to tell him of the others. He tried to reach Janey with *yarva,* but she did not answer. As he stood there, conversing with the two Earthmen in whispers, Alinoa pressed open the door and entered.

"The ship is in a field not far. One of the Nadar is thinking of it. He can see it from his cell. Perhaps if we entered that cell, we could destroy the bars with this weapon, and so reach the outside. Once on the ship, we will have a better chance of blasting this place open and finding our friends. I cannot imagine why I can't reach Janey or my Fenir-dren warriors . . ."

But as they moved out into the corridor, to follow Alinoa, the slithering sound of Vail flesh gliding along the flags of the floor froze them. Before they could conceal themselves again within the cell, around the corner glided three of the rubbery creatures. Frank did not know the range of his weapon, but he pointed it, pressed the trigger—and nothing happened.

The Vail, stopping, gazed in silence, their finger fringes moving through their still incomprehensible signs, Frank, knowing now he had to be very close to use his weapon, bounded toward them, with Ancil and Hendryks at his heels. Farar crashed his weight into the first of them, and as he felt the little mouths on the creature's upper curve burn into his flesh, he thrust his weapon against the thing and fired. The Vail thrashed in agony, but his strength seemed unabated, and Frank was gripped tight against him, held helpless. He moved the little weapon up and down the rubbery front writhing against him, and seconds later was free, the thing curled up into a ball at his feet. His two friends, however, still stood, in a silent struggle with

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the indestructible things, which only stood pressing their captives against their many mouths, greedily taking blood, knowing they would weaken. Frank dosed each of the two with the strange weapon's vibrations, and they curled up in balls of agony. Apparently they had only two physical defenses—to take blood, or to curl up in the manner of an armadillo. The punches the two had thrown into their elastic bodies had had no effect.

"The next one gets my feet," grunted Ancil, rubbing his knuckles. "Their hide is like sandpaper."

In minutes they were letting themselves out the window of a cowering little Nadar's cell. It was only a ten-foot drop to the ground. Some hundred yards away the shape of several ovoid craft loomed at the edge of a flat smooth field, and beyond lay the long narrow bulk of the star ship. Farther beyond loomed the great square bulk of another prison. Alinoa clutched Frank's arm: "I hear Janey! She is calling me from that building. And the others—they are there too!"

"They are probably all there. We were moved over here for torture in the special chambers. There's nothing but cells in that building. Let's get into the ship, then if there's no alarm, send after the others. We may get away with this, if we have luck."

They bounded through the dark, slowed up to pass silently around the Vail ships, found their own ship closed and silent. With trembling fingers Hendryks tried the air lock levers, crawled into the lock. The others hurried after, pulled the metal disk closed after them. Farar pushed open the inner door, his weapon in his hand but the ship was silent and apparently empty.

There was no time for a thorough search. They gave the ship a once-over swiftly, then Hendryks took Frank's weapon and started off after the others. Frank climbed into the gun blister, swiveled the gun around to bear on the big main door of the building into which Hendryks had gone.

One by one the members of their party appeared out of the dark, climbed into the ship. Last of all was myself. I had brought along my little Nadarine companion. She climbed ahead of me through the air lock, stood open-mouthed while we dogged shut the lock.

Frank lifted the ship silently up on the anti-gravs alone. Like a balloon, it floated slowly skyward. The minutes ticked by like hours, as we awaited the same numbing vibration from below which had knocked us out of the sky before. But it did not come.

"I'd like to drop a stick or two on that cattle pen," growled Frank, sitting in the bucket seat of the rapid firer—But I put a hand out to stop him. "You'd only bring on instant pursuit. From now on you listen to me! Get us off this planet! Don't hang around trying to knock out a whole planet full of enemies! Get going! If they follow, they follow. We'll know about it soon enough.

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Better to warn Earth as well as bring its enemies to its location, than not to warn them and have the Vail sneak up on them. They'd find our system soon enough, without our help."

But, just as we were all feeling elated and sure of escape, from below came a series of flashes, and a score of rocket exhausts jetted past us. Against our hull come a rattle of missiles, and each of us felt the numbing terrible effect as a ray brushed us, passed on. Hendryks shot home the throttle, and the ship leaped out from under us at an acceleration that left us all unconscious.

AS I came out of it, I stumbled to the view panes, looking down. There was only the far distant green of the Siran forests. The globe was already visibly round, and the sun lit three quarters of the ball. Silhouetted against the dark green were at least a score of dark oval objects, speeding after us. There was no jet trail. Whatever drove them left no flame.

From the dark green face of the planet erupted continually more and more of the big ovoids, and in minutes the whole round globe beneath was dotted with the dark speeding eggs. Hendryks held the throttle down until I could just remain conscious against the terrific pressure, but the objects on our trail did not recede. An idea struck me.

"I suspect our fate depends on their knowing the little trick of applying full power in the zones of weightlessness—"

Hendryks bellowed: "Do you think I've been wasting my time? I got a look at those ships of theirs, if you didn't. They didn't chase me, they didn't even think I had any sense. I know they haven't got the stuff we pack; but they've got plenty! They've got atomic power, and it's different from our method. Just what the ships will do, I don't know, but I'm sure going to find out. I think we'll leave them behind when we really turn on the juice.

That flight, through empty space, toward no point of the compass familiar to us, was a nightmare game of guessing. We weren't sure they knew enough to use their full propulsion power when in a weightless state, so we kept just ahead until long after we were out into emptiness barren of all gravitational influence.

But our hesitation toward showing our speed resulted in an unlooked for increase in our pursuit. The big black Vail ships behind us increased steadily in numbers, and for hours we were not able to understand where they were coming from. Then we finally grasped it.

The speed at which we were cruising was far below their potential. This gave them plenty of time to bring up more and more craft, to organize a thorough pursuit. The fleet behind us grew until it was a wide crescent, the horns almost even, with our ship in the center. They meant to match our speed, keep us in range of detection, until we have disclosed our ultimate destination. They obviously meant to have enough forces

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to repel any possible attack upon them when we reached home planet. They were evidently confident of being able to keep us in range, no matter what we attempted.

Our last hope was the thinnest kind of thread to which to cling. We had either to guide them to the home of man and doom it forever to slavery and eventual extinction, or to give ourselves up when we ran out of fuel—or so I was certain.

There was no answer in my mind to our predicament. My eyes sought Frank's in a despairing glance, my mind numb with the struggle to see some possible opening for us in the encircling barrier of Vail craft.

One of Frank's eyelids lowered in a broad wink, and a kind of hysterical laugh came from my lips. What could he find to wink about? Why was he grinning like a cat about to eat a mouse?

"Don't give up yet, Hal!" He slapped me on the back. "There's a trick or two left in the old bag that I've been saving for last. Remember, those animated bloodsacks don't have eyes, and the sense of sight they do have is one using the bat's night sight, a kind of echo sense. Their radar devices for seeing at long range are probably not much more refined than the devices used by Earth armies for a century. And radar can be fooled. Let's see what we can do with it."

I gave a gasp as the air rushed into my lungs in a long sigh of relief. I shouted, as the idea sank in. "Our flyers used to release bunches of metal foil floaters that gave false images in the radar screens! But don't tell me a little tin-foil will fool those babies! They must be able to see better than that!"

Frank shook his head. "I got a squint at some of their vision screens when they were questioning us. It didn't look too good, what I saw on the screen was a long way from being full vision, though of course what their senses were detecting on that same screen may have been full vision to them. It just depends, too, on how apt their radar boys are in interpreting what they sense from the screens. I think a dummy contraption would fool them. Just to make sure, let's make up a bomb that throws a lot of foil out behind us, see what they do with it?"

It was something to do. We got busy, prepared a black-powder bomb with a lot of foil cuttings, released it out the garbage hatch. It exploded behind us, and in the weightless, airless ether the foil acted as if it were so many fragments of a fragmentation bomb, went flying off in all directions at great speed. Immediately each and everyone of the pursuing craft took evasive action, and the whole vast fleet suddenly scattered right and left and up and down as they zoomed away from the area of the fake explosion.

Frank gave an exultant short. "To them, that foil is as solid as rock! They can be fooled!"

Our whole crew turned to them, manufacturing a dummy ship. It was collapsible, made up of rings of wire,

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to which the foil was fastened in long strips. It looked like a big fish trap when we got through with it, or like a Chinese dragon waiting for the paint and the occupants. Once out in space, towed by one of our life rafts at a speed equal to our own, it would elongate and assume a tapering cylindrical shape approximating our own long, lean taper.

We set the scene for our exit very carefully. We released a series of the foil bombs in our trail, until space was littered behind us with fake objects of foil which must have set their eyeless perceptions into a tizzy trying to make out what was going on. Then we released the life raft, set to proceed at a gradually increasing acceleration, and towing the fake foil cylinder we hoped would give them the impression that the ship was proceeding on her original course. As the raft left us, Frank unlimbered the long auto-rifle and set it firing on auto-finder, throwing real proximity fuse projectiles back along our trail. We all knew how those things acted in space. If the fleet slowed up to see what was going on, the shells would be attracted to the hulls of the Vail craft inevitably, exploding as soon as they neared the black craft.

The auto-rifle chattered a steady *pom-pom-pom* as the big foil bag still beside us unfolded, stretched out, began slowly to veer off as Frank swung the ship onto a new course. Frank gave one pull on the "alarm, full acceleration," and we all braced ourselves in our pneumatic seats.

When I came out of the black-out, it was to see Janey shaking my shoulder, with tears in her eyes. "What's the matter, girl? Are we taken again?" I asked dully.

"No, you beautiful boob, there isn't a Vail ship in the skies. Nothing but the stars, and are they gorgeous. The sight of a clean sky makes me weep, that's all."

Frank was puffing a cigar, relaxed over the controls. He shouted at me as I unzipped from the seat and tottered up to look out the rear-view screens. "We went out of there so fast they never even saw us leave! If they follow that fake clear to Betelgeuse, thinking it's leading them to our planet, they may never get back! I hope they are that dumb!"

I inspected the blazing stars in all directions, dreading to find the telltale eclipse of a part of that brilliant counterpoint that only the Gods can weave. There was nothing. "Could be there was so much clutter in their screens, that even if they detected our ruse in time, they couldn't tell which trail in all that junk was ours and which a shell or a bit of foil heading out . . ." I mused, and Frank took out his cigar and coughed.

"I thought I'd enjoy this cigar, not having had one since we ran into the Vail. And the dang thing is dried out."

Janey came running with his pipe, laughter mixed with the tears which were still shining in her eyes. She began chattering, and at her staccato soprano I felt finally reassured that

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life had returned to normal.

"Given full power like that," Janey was saying, "we must have left there like a light particle that got scared. I'll bet no human eye would have seen us leave, either!"

Frank scowled at the cigar and ground it under his foot, while Janey filled his pipe. Lighting it, he rumbled in his throat, contentedly talking as if he didn't care if I heard or not, and I knew everything was normal. He was talking for my benefit and *yarvaing* for their benefit, and Alinoa was bending over his shoulder to look at the charts beside him. "A weightless ship must start off at one hell of a speed at that, and inertia created by the acceleration is a lot less than you'd expect. We add velocity like a cashier over a grocery basket in a chain market, like crazy! I don't believe any eye could follow maneuvers at such speeds. You have to be going the same speed and the same direction even to detect an object close up at such speeds."

We settled down to weeks of anxious watchfulness. But not a single black hulk ever showed in our scopes.

IT WAS a great relief to get back, for about ten minutes. Then the hullabaloo began. The papers played us up, and just as Frank had predicted, the "great minds," the "authorities" upon whom the United Nations Assembly liked to base their decisions in matters that required genuine technical knowledge—would have none of our warnings. The officially subsidized news sheets began a campaign of mud smearing against us, pooh-poohed our photographs and articles of Vail manufacture as fakes, refused to countenance the idea that we had been imprisoned by and escaped from a great rival civilization in space. Our photographs were confiscated from the newspaper offices, editors were warned not to print "panic propaganda," our names were stigmatized in all but a few papers as publicity seekers who did not hesitate to throw the whole world into confusion and panic to gain our ends.

The most furious of our number was Harry Ancil. He had spent all his time, during our return, compiling all our data into convincing form, taking statements from each member of the crew, and had the whole thing on microfilm, prints of which he had sent to his own acquaintances in the financial world. As the tide of opinion turned against us and officialdom began to utter threats of prosecution and imprisonment against us, he went into action.

Within hours he had enlisted millions in cash and some of the greatest names in the top ranks of financiers. By buying newspaper plants complete, he had managed to get his own newspapers on the street in twenty-four hours, containing nothing at all but huge headlines—"The Truth about Invasion from Space"—and the whole paper taken up with complete reproductions of his microfilms. These contained photographs of the Vail craft, of their cities seen

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in Alinoa's ancient penetrative-ray screens, of the Vail themselves. The careful compilation of our evidence thus presented was overwhelming.

What followed was a kind of bloodless revolution. The clique of political figures who had been running the U. N. Assembly were recalled by their governments, and new representatives appointed.

Ancil's new press hailed the change as "Common Sense Takes Over," and the new assembly immediately adopted a resolution empowering the U. N. military police to requisition all materials and locations necessary to encircle the world with space-fleet bases, capable of maintaining a battle-fleet in action and of defending Earth against invasion. Each nation was ordered to construct as many of the new type space craft as their resources and abilities permitted.

But Ancil wasn't through. He followed through with the creation of the "Foundation of Extra-terrestrial Expansion" and the old Worran and Farar mining corporation found itself swallowed up in a vast combination of money and brains assembled by Ancil, directly subsidized by the U. N. treasury.

Frank and I found ourselves with luxurious offices. My door bore the title "Vice-President in Charge of Pioneer Colonization," while Frank's read: "Chief of the Bureau of Instruction in Pioneering Techniques." We have several other high-sounding titles, being appointed to various boards and committees. But the one title that takes our time is "Advisor to the Board of Co-Ordination of the United Space Navies of Earth." Old Earth is really building a whopping big space fleet, and it won't be manned with children if we have anything to say about it.

Meanwhile, Janey had another baby and Alinoa is expecting any day now. Which former I found more nerve wracking than all my many duties as general factotum around the revitalized United Nations' Governmental Offices.

We're too busy, nowadays, to think about anything but getting ready to repel invasion if it comes.

But I know the Vail are doomed. You see, Frank hasn't gotten a chance, yet, to put a rifle sight on a Scarpein. He won't rest till he does, and you can't go hunting on the Vail planet as long as the Vail are around. So they won't be there long!

Ter-Lin? Janey fixed that! She got a husband for her in a hurry, and it wasn't hard to do! That was one thing the Vail really did well— Ter-Lin is one sweet bit of feminine dynamite.

No girl to take chances, my little Janey—she won't even let me play with matches!

THE END

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By Mack Reynolds

Alternate Universe

When you sign on the dotted line for a miracle, it's tough to find out you've signed to perform the miracle yourself!

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"SATISFIED? Counfound it! why *should* I be satisfied?"

"No. No, I don't demand my money back. It's not the money, understand, although, heavens knows, your rates are exorbitant."

"Yes, I'll admit that the contract was fulfilled, substantially, that is, all except for one minor point. Yes, I lost seventy pounds and, yes, I was freed of both alcohol and tobacco, but that isn't it. Not at all."

"I don't believe you have a complete picture of just what happened. Let me start from the beginning."

* * *

I know myself, I'm quite sure, beyond the usual point. It's something I have striven for since early maturity. And it has paid off too. You can see, by just looking about my office here, that I haven't done so badly in life.

And knowing yourself entails awareness of your weak points as well as your strong ones.

I've had two major weaknesses, I'd say. The first physical, or possibly, sensual, would be the better word, and the second a psychological one.

I like my food, always have, been a gourmet ever since I've been able to afford the delicacies of the table, and that's been almost fifteen years now. Doesn't take being a gourmand long, either, before you find yourself pushing that old two hundred and fifty mark.

Then there's the wine and liqueurs. I suppose if Frank Schoonmaker or one of the other authorities would name the outstanding half dozen connoisseurs of vintage wines in this country, my name would be right there. Not an alcoholic, of course, no true connoisseur is, but one who has made a study of the product of the grape, and has learned fully to appreciate the art.

And, of course, tobacco. Since the advent of the cigarette, the real appreciation of Lady Nicotine, I've always thought, has fallen off. Personally, my regard of a fine Cuban, and formerly of a good Manila, has been that of an expert. Just before this incident, I was having a fellow down in Havana make them up for me. Cost about a dollar and a half apiece, but worth every penny.

And my second fault, I mustn't forget to mention that. I've always had a keen eye for feminine beauty and in my day—I say this without fear of being ostentatious—was quite successful with the sex. But I put all this behind me when I met Nadine.

Yes, Nadine. To give you a quick picture, I would mention, first, Hedy Lamarr, her beauty of face, her delicacy. Then, there would be Esther Williams, her figure, her grace of movement. Then, to complete the portrait, I would mention Ingrid Bergman, her charm. That perhaps would give yau an inadequate conception of Nadine.

Yes, I can only say that my second weakness was that of profound jealousy.

Jealousy, understand? Burning, raging, all consuming jealousy! Can you picture, for only a moment, a man married to a woman such as

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this?—a man with a forty-five inch waistline? A man, who of necessity, had to stay at his desk twelve hours and more a day, while she remained alone at home!

Yes, jealousy. I know myself. I admit the weakness, the fault. Jealousy beyond bearing.

And then Doctor Klein's diagnosis. His commands. I must lose at least sixty pounds, I must cut out all alcohol, I must stop smoking, I must refrain from outbreaks of temper. All this, or—the doctor was quite blunt—all this or I would die within months.

It shouldn't be difficult to understand that any single one of these orders would have taken a major effort on my part to obey. Alcohol has meant too much to me for too many years, as has tobacco, not to speak of losing a full sixty pounds. Sixty pounds do you understand?

I shall not even mention the control of my temper. But keep in mind that Nadine was alone, beyond my control, beyond my knowledge of her movements a full twelve hours of the day.

Well, it was then that your Mr. Mawson contacted me. I recall very clearly the morning he entered my office. I thought, at first, he was a salesman, natty, clean cut, smooth, and I was impatient to have him say his piece and get out. In fact, I wondered why Miss Carr had admitted him.

The conversation went something like this:

"I'll come right to the point, sir," he said. "Through sources of our own, our concern has learned that your doctor has ordered you to lose sixty pounds"—he was consulting his notebook—"to break yourself of both the tobacco and alcohol habits, and to achieve a greater degree of serenity." His eyebrows went up. "Is that correct?"

"Confound it," I growled at him. "What possible business is it of yours?"

He said, still in that smooth voice of his, "We can guarantee to fulfill all of your doctor's orders in a very short time."

I snorted. "For your information, Mr. . . ." I looked at his card again ". . . Mr. Mawson, it is utterly impossible for me to leave my work for a period of . . . of weeks, months, or whatever time you are speaking about, to spend it in a sanitarium or some confounded health resort. Utterly, impossible. Now if you'll pardon me—"

He said easily, "It would be accomplished immediately."

Of course; I didn't understand him. Who would have?

I began to blurt something impatiently, but he interrupted.

"You would lose your sixty pounds, your desire for alcohol and tobacco, and would regain a tranquility you haven't known for years, all in a matter of seconds."

"Fine," I said, making no effort to keep the sarcasm from my voice. "And now, if you'll pardon me, Mr. . . . uh . . . Mr. Mawson, I have work to do." I was telling myself in-

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wardly that I must not get excited. Doctor Klein had been very specific there. I mustn't get excited. No matter how ridiculous, no matter what a crackpot, no matter . . .

He had whipped a legal appearing document from his briefcase and thrust it under my nose. A fountain pen materialized in his hand.

"If you'll just sign here," he said.

I could feel the red creeping up from my collar. *"Calmly now, calmly,"* I muttered. I looked down at the paper, the contract.

It was quite simply stated. For twenty-five thousand dollars, *Last Alternative, Inc.* contracted to relieve me of sixty pounds, the alcohol and tobacco habits, and to restore my nervous system to a state of tranquility—instantaneously.

In spite of myself, I laughed at him, not that it was a very pleasant laugh.

"Your prices are rather extreme," I said.

"So are our services. Now if you will just sign here."

Anything to get rid of him. I took the pen and scribbled my signature at the dotted line he indicated.

He took a small kit, in appearance quite similar to a first aid kit, from his briefcase and handed it to me. He took another flat metal box, approximately the same size, and walked across the room to an electric outlet.

"Confound it . . ." I began, feeling the red creeping up my neck again.

And that was about the last I got out. He'd taken an electric cord from his little container and plugged it into the outlet, turned to me with a flashlight-like device in his hand, trained it accurately right at my head, and pushed a button.

I WOKE up on what was obviously, even from the first glance, a South Pacific atoll, no more than ten acres in size, and without other sign of land in any direction.

Looking back at it now, I cannot remember too clearly those first hours, or possibly it was days. They must have been terrible. Undoubtedly, it was then that I did my initial exploring, my initial investigation of the spot I was in.

A coral atoll, less than a dozen acres in all. No animal life, whatsoever, except for a multitude of birds. Several hundred coconut palms, a lagoon swarming with fish, crabs, and other seafood.

Yes, one of the tropical paradises you read about.

It must have been during those first hours, too, that I inspected the little kit that Mawson had given me. I have said that it appeared to be a first aid kit. Well, in a way it was. Possibly survivor's kit would be the better description. It was probably one of the outfits with which the Air Forces supplies its men when they fly out over the ocean. You know, fish hooks, a tiny combination .22 rifle and .410 shotgun with about a score of shells for each caliber, a few medicines, some bandages, matches, that sort of thing.

Not one ounce of food.

It took me some time, hours, days,

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possibly even weeks, although I don't think it was that long a period, for me to realize that my position wasn't nearly as bad as it had first seemed.

I gave up the attempt to find rhyme and reason in it all. Eventually, I knew, I would be rescued, all I could do now was adapt myself as well as I could to my environment. I was convinced that my day of revenge would come. I didn't know how it had been accomplished, but I knew that one day, Mawson and *Last Alternative, Inc.* would pay for this. God, how they would pay.

Somehow, most of the time, I managed to keep Nadine from my mind. That way, I knew lay madness.

As I say, my position wasn't nearly as bad as it had first seemed.

I am not an elderly man. Just past my middle thirties, in fact. And my days of hunting, fishing, and camping were not so far back that they were forgotten to me, nor my two or three years in the army in the South Pacific during the war.

There was food all about me. Coconuts, fish, shellfish, eggs, birds, and even edible forms of seaweed; a little book which came in the kit told me of the seaweed. Oh, I made out all right as far as the food was concerned.

There's little use going into detail. I assume that just about everyone has read Robinson Crusoe. That was me. All except having a man Friday. I made a calendar, I built up a pile of brush for signaling in case a ship came near, I improvised clothing, since I had awakened on the beach completely nude. In short, I did all of the things necessary that I do.

And I waited for a ship, knowing that in these days of a shrinking world, it was only a matter of time. I waited for a ship and for my revenge and busied myself, and kept Nadine as far from my thoughts as possible.

Oh, I had my bad times, my periods of depression and hopelessness and even periods of soul shriveling jealousy. Where was she? Who was she with? Had I been proclaimed dead and had she married again? That sort of thing. I need not go over it. Looking back, now, it is fairly easy to be philosophical about the whole matter.

Possibly the worst time was when the ship appeared, out on the horizon —and went on. It was too far, really, to get a good view of it. Appeared to be something like a Spanish galleon. I wouldn't be surprised, from what I've learned since, if it was Magellan, or possibly, Sir Francis Drake, but, of course, I'll never know.

I don't know why I'm stretching this out so long. It isn't really necessary.

Suffice to say, that one day, after a passage of possibly six months, I was seated before my fire eating my noon day meal when I suddenly awoke in my office.

I suppose awoke is as good a term as any to use. At any rate, at one moment I was on the beach of my South Pacific atoll, and the next I was again in my office, and with Mr. Mawson, still across the room, his flashlight-like gadget still in hand.

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He said, "Successful, I see. Excellent. And now the check?"

Surprisingly, I didn't lose my wits. Or was it surprising? Possibly not. The six months had brought me a tranquility, an ease of mind, that hadn't been mine for a good many years.

But I sat there for long moments, clutching the edge of my desk, and slowly assimilating the situation.

Nothing seemed changed, except for my clothes which hung, bag-like, about my body.

Mr. Mawson returned to the chair he had been occupying and sat down, obviously awaiting my pleasure. He took a cigarette from his pocket and lit it.

The smoke, after my long months of clean, fresh sea air, smelled abominable.

Finally, I reached out my hand, flicked the switch of the inter-office communicator and said, "Miss Carr, what time do you have?"

"Two o'clock, sir."

I said, "Did you make a note of when Mr. Mawson entered my office?"

"Certainly, sir, as always. Mr. Mawson was to have ten minutes maximum. Thus far, he has used seven. Mr. Bentley is waiting to see you, sir."

Bentley! Good Lord, was he *still* in my outer office. He . . .

I steeled myself, flicked the switch off, and swung on Mawson. "All right," I said. "Talk."

He shrugged, and ground his cigarette on in the tray. What in the world was he burning, ground up army blanket? It smelled atrocious.

He said, "You have lost at least sixty pounds weight. You have been freed from your desire for tobacco and alcohol. You've had a rest which has restored your nervous system. You owe, *Last Alternative, Inc.* twenty-five thousand dollars."

He was very calm about it.

I suppose I could stretch this part of my story out too, but it will be sufficient to say that within twenty minutes I had recovered to the point where my questions were at least intelligent.

I said finally, "Now then, once again. Go over it once more, please. Perhaps I'll understand better."

He was patient, but I suppose that's part of his job.

"Briefly," he said, "the founder of our concern discovered that the theory, long held by a good many prominent scientists, of alternate universes is more than a theory."

"Wait a minute," I said. "Explain this alternative universes deal again."

"I was about to. There are, he proved, an infinite number of universes coexisting, an infinite number of space-time continuums. Given this, it is easy to comprehend that somewhere, in all these infinite universes, everything has happened, will happen and is happening. *Everything.*"

"Now let me get this," I said desperately. "You mean that somewhere there is an earth in which George Washington lost the Revolutionary War and the British still own America?"

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"That's right," he nodded. "And somewhere, Napoleon won at Waterloo, somewhere Hitler won the second World War. And so on and so on. I repeat, everything has happened, will happen and is happening."

"In other words, there are numerous worlds in which there are people just like me, with the same name as mine, possibly the only difference is that they are wearing white socks this moment instead of the blue ones I have on."

He nodded. "You're getting it now."

"And what you did was to throw me into another such universe where I stayed for roughly six months, of its time, but less than a minute of the time of this universe. You picked, besides, a time several centuries ago, so that there was no chance of my being rescued." I leaned back in the chair and tried to comprehend all that.

He was coming to his feet. "You have it now, sir. I'm afraid I couldn't describe the process, you wouldn't understand. But now, if you'll just make out your check."

"Wait a minute," I snapped. "My wife, Nadine!"

"Is at home where you left her this morning. I needn't mention that I am sure she will appreciate your wonderfully improved physical condition, sir." His voice was smooth.

It struck me suddenly, just how much I had gained. He was right. My figure was straight, muscular, I had a beautiful tan. I had no desire for either a drink nor even a cigar. My nerves were steady, calm.

And for all practical purposes, this had been accomplished in less than sixty seconds.

I wrote out the check and handed it to him, silently.

As he turned to leave, I flicked the switch and said, "Cancel all the afternoon appointments and get my tailor and haberdasher up here, please. Just as soon as possible. And, oh yes, Miss Carr, phone the florist and have him send two dozen of his very best . . ."

* * *

"So that, in brief, is what happened when your Mr. Mawson called on me."

"What is my complaint! What do you mean, *what is my complaint?* Can't you see! Don't you understand!"

"Yes, yes! Of course, we're happy! No, I'm not regaining my weight. I've given up that ridiculous escapism of stuffing myself with food, and, no, I drink practically not at all, and haven't had a cigar in my mouth since my . . . my return."

"Jealousy of my wife? Of course not. Well, not in the ordinary sense of the word. She's crazy about me, now that I'm one eighty instead of two fifty. We're supremely happy!"

"But don't you see? Can't you understand! In some of these endless other universes, I'm still a fat man, I still weigh two hundred and fifty. And Nadine! *What is she doing with her spare time in those other universes? Who is she running around with? How can I be sure?*

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Lost Continents

By L. Sprague de Camp

No. 2

The Resurgence of Atlantis*

Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tennyson

WHEN the aggressive and acquisitive young giant, Western Civilization, was a baby, his mother, the Roman Catholic Church, soothed him with stories of God and Heaven and saints and angels and miracles and Madonnas. As soon as he could toddle, however, he began reaching out in all directions to find out things for himself. And one of the things he reached for was geographical knowledge.

During the Dark and Middle Ages there was much talk of lands in or beyond the Atlantic Ocean, some based on fact and some on fancy rich with tales "of the Cannibals that each other eat, The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads Do grow beneath their shoulders." There was for instance the tale (which first appeared in the fifteenth century) of seven bishops who fled Spain with their flocks in 734 A.D., at the time of the Saracen conquest and, sailing westward, found an island on which they erected seven cities. This island was sometimes identified with the large rectangular island called Antilha, Antillia, or Antigla ("the counter-island," pronounced 'ahn-*teel*-yah') which appeared upon many pre-Columbian maps. Antillia corresponded so closely in size, shape, and direction with the real Cuba that when the latter and its neighbors were finally found they were

*Slightly condensed from *Lost Continents: The Atlantis Theme in History, Science, & Literature*, by L. Sprague de Camp; Phila.: Prime Press, 1952; copr. 1952 by L. Sprague de Camp.

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promptly named the Antilles. And eighteen years before Columbus set out on his first American voyage, the astronomer Toscanelli wrote him suggesting Antillia as an ideal stopover on the way to Cathay.

Babcock the geographer thought that the pre-Columbian Antillia was evidence of a pre-Columbian voyage that actually touched Cuba—not, perhaps, entirely impossible. There is a long-standing controversy on theories of possible voyages to the New World before Columbus, based upon hints in pre-Columbian maps and travel tales, but nothing you can definitely pin down. Hjalmar Holand, for instance, has been writing for years arguing that the expedition under Paul Knudson, sent to Greenland by King Haakon VI of Norway in mid-fourteenth century, continued on to North America, where they built the mysterious Round Tower of Newport and inscribed the dubious Kensington Rune Stone. At least one medieval map-maker in 1455 identified Antillia with Plato's Atlantis, notwithstanding that Atlantis was supposed to have sunk.

It was also said that about the same time as the flight of the seven bishops, an Irish monk named Brendan set out to find an ideal site for a monastery. At any rate later geographers speckled the Atlantic with St. Brendan's Isles, and romancers embroidered his tale with demons, dragons, sea-serpents, and volcanic islands, many of his adventures showing a suspicious resemblance to episodes in the *Odyssey* and the stories of Sinbad the Sailor. If such a man ever did go a-voyaging, which is more than doubtful, he may have rediscovered the Fortunate Isles.

Meanwhile the authors of the Arthurian legend-cycle described their king as convalescing from the wound he got in the Battle of Camlan on the fairy island of Avalon ("apple island"), in the West, waiting, like Barbarossa in his Kyffhäuserberg and Marko Kralyevich under his pine-trees, until the day when he should return to lead his people. With him were Olaf Tryggvasson, the Christianizing king of Norway, and Ogier the Dane, one of Charlemagne's legendary paladins.

To come down from fiction to fact, the Norse discovered North America about 1000 A.D. despite Lord Raglan's attempt to prove the stories of Leif Eiriksson and Thorfinn Karlsevni mere myths. Even if Leif was another Irish sun-god in human guise, the authors of the sagas could hardly have hit upon so accurate a description of the American Indians ("dark men and ugly, with unkempt hair . . . large eyes and broad cheeks . . ." wearing leather jackets, paddling skin boats, fighting with bows, slings, and clubs, and obviously ignorant of cloth, iron, and cattle) unless somebody had been to America and returned to tell the tale.

This discovery made enough talk for the Pope to appoint a Bishop of Vinland, and although it was not followed up by permanent colonization it was never quite completely forgotten. Some have thought Colum-

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bus might have heard of it on the trip to Iceland he made in his early years while following the family business of travelling drygoods salesman. He is also said to have been impressed by the hint of transoceanic lands in Seneca's *Medea,* quoted at the head of Chapter VII.

A century after the Norse voyages, the Arab geographer Edrisi told of another Atlantic voyage: A party of eight "deluded folk" sailed from Lisbon (then a Muslim city), found stinking shallow water covering dangerous reefs, then a region of darkness in which lay an island inhabited only by sheep. Twelve days' sail further south they came upon an island inhabited by tall tan people whose king, after questioning them sharply through an Arabic-speaking interpreter, sent them blindfolded to the African coast, whence they found their way home. Had these wanderers touched at Madeira and the Canaries, and in the latter place been interrogated by a Guanche chief? Possibly.

The scattering of hypothetical islands about the Atlantic really got started in the years following the voyages of Columbus. Then rumors of new lands ran riot, as the explorers were often far from accurate in their reports. As a result, the maps became covered with a swarm of geographical chimeras. Faulty navigation often caused a real land to be reported in several different places; and clouds, driftwood, and simple eyestrain led to many reports of rocks and islands where none existed. Thus Ortelius's world map of 1570 included the fictitious Isle of Brazil, St. Brendan's Isle, Isle of the Seven Cities, Green Island, Isle of the Demons, Vlaenderen, Drogio, Emperadadă, Estotiland, Grocland, and Frisland—the last an imaginary twin of the real Iceland, begotten by confusion between Iceland and the Faeröes.

The ghostly Isle of Brazil, which haunted the maps for many years, was not finally exorcised until the nineteenth century. It was usually located a few hundred miles west of southern Ireland, and described as circular—in one case as a ring of islands. This phantom land was kept alive by reports like that of a Captain Nisbet who in 1674 arrived in Scotland with some "castaways" he claimed to have rescued from the Isle of Brazil. He said that the island was inhabited by huge black rabbits and by a magician who had been keeping the castaways captive in his castle until the gallant captain broke the spell that bound them. Alas for romance! there never was any such island.

This map of Ortelius also showed the great southern continent—*Terra Australis Incognita*—which geographers from the time of Claudius Ptolemy had been putting in the southern Indian and South Pacific Oceans. Belief in this circumpolar land—like Antarctica but ten times as big—originated in the mass of speculations of Classical times about possible continents in the Western and Southern Hemispheres.

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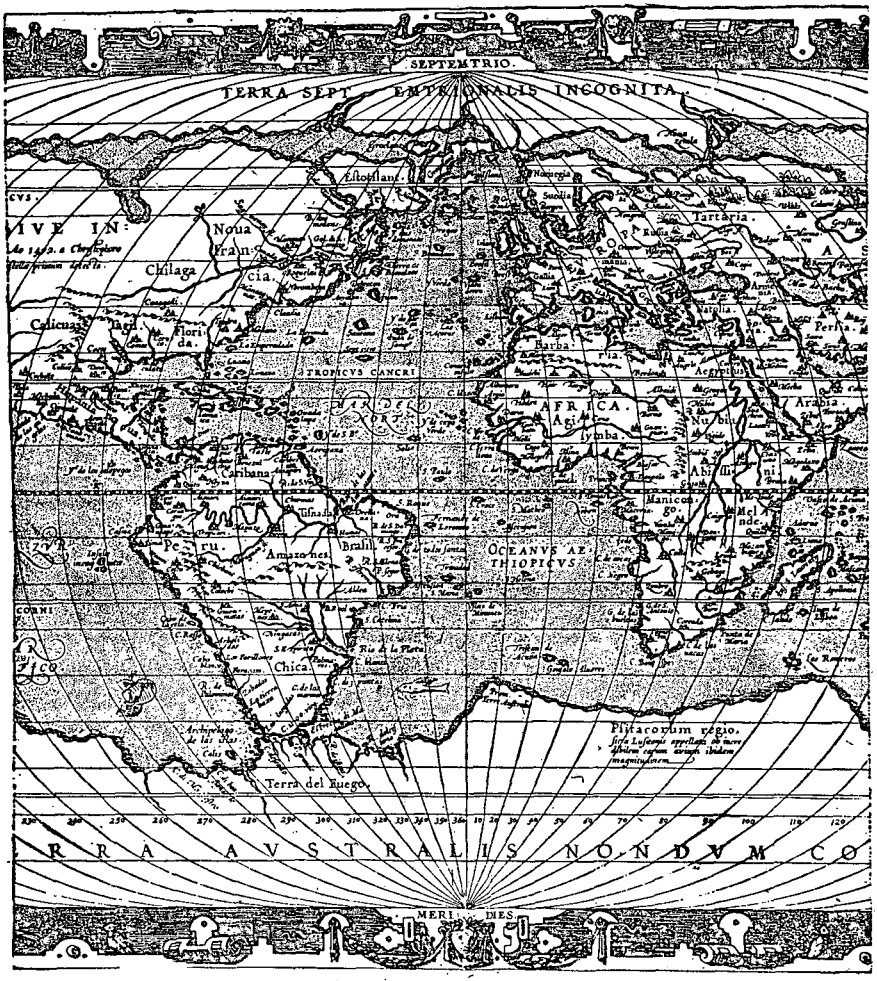

ORTELIUS'S WORLD MAP OF 1570, center section, showing imaginary Atlantic islands (Brazil, etc.) and imaginary polar continents. One of the captions on Terra Australis, the south polar continent, states that it is inhabited by gigantic parrots.

To the early Greek geographers, Europe was *the* continent, with Asia and Africa mere peninsulas dangling from it. That is how it happens that we still speak, absurdly enough, of Europe as a continent instead of,

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more accurately, as a peninsula attached to *the* continent of Asia. Even after discovery had expanded Asia and Africa to continental size, the ancient map-makers continued to show them as having only a fraction of their true dimensions. In the days when people thought the earth was flat, men supposed that these three "continents" (Europe, Asia, and Africa) were surrounded by a river or a ring-shaped sea, called "the Ocean," and beyond "the Ocean" lay an unknown land stretching away to nobody knew where, as Silenos told Midas in Theopompos's fairytale.

When the round earth came in, the Alexandrine astronomers calculated that the three "continents" altogether occupied less than a quarter of the globe, which was thought to be divided into five zones: two polar zones too cold for life, an equatorial zone so hot the ocean boiled, and two intermediate temperate belts, one north and one south of the equator.

Now, philosophers of the Pythagorean school of thought (including Plato) supposed that the gods built the universe along lines of artistic symmetry. Therefore it seemed natural to them that there should be other land masses besides the group with which they were familiar, to balance the latter—three others according to Krates of Mallos (second century B.C.) occupying the three remaining quarters of the globe. The great Alexandrine scientist Hipparchos thought Ceylon might be the northern tip of such a land. Some geographer named this hypothetical continent *Antichthon* ("counter-Earth") having borrowed the name from the Pythagoreans, who used it to designate the imaginary planet they had invented to bring the number of the movable heavenly bodies up to the mystic ten. Aristotle, although he rejected the idea of other inhabited planets, thought such continents likely. A few centuries later Strabo admitted the possibility, but deemed such speculations useless until somebody had been there to see.

Then, in the second century, the Egyptian astronomer and mathematician Klaudios Ptolemaios ("Claudius Ptolemy," no known relation to the royal Ptolemies) wrote a great *Geography* wherein he made a couple of major blunders. One was to reverse the mistake of his forerunners by making Asia and Africa much larger than they really were. The other was to infer, probably from a wrong report that the Indian Ocean had no tides, that this ocean must be an inland sea like the Mediterranean. Therefore he made Africa curve around to the east at its southern end, and Asia curve south at its eastern end where the Malay Peninsula exists in fact, until they met and inclosed the Indian Ocean.

Some later geographers (including Columbus) expanding on Ptolemy's ideas, assumed that the land surface of the globe was much larger than its water surface, so that all the oceans were merely oversized ponds completely surrounded by this land. It took the Age of Exploration to

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prove that these folk were wrong and Aristotle right: that the water surface was much the larger, and that the continents were islands entirely surrounded by water.

Of course the Phoenician sailors whom King Niku II of Egypt had sent on a perilous voyage around Africa had disproved the idea of the southern Asian-African connection seven centuries before, but for a long time the story of their voyage was looked upon with skepticism. Similar attempts by the Iranian noble Sataspes (who undertook the trip to escape execution for rape, failed, and was executed anyway) and the intrepid explorer Eudoxos of Kyzikos ended in defeat. Hence belief in the southern Afrasian connection was not finally killed until Vasco da Gama's voyage around Africa to India in 1497-98.

Early Christian thought was generally hostile to belief in transoceanic continents. Besides the anti-scientific extremists like Kosmas who tried to revive belief in a flat earth, others, willing to admit the roundness of the earth, could not bring themselves to swallow the thought of the Antipodes—the land where people walked with their feet pointing up. Many Christian theologians like St. Augustine and Isidore of Seville opposed belief in the Antipodes on the ground that the gospel had never been preached there, and neither Christ nor the Apostles had gone there, notwithstanding St. Paul's statement that "verily, their sound went unto all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." However, the anti-scientific wing of Christianity never really stamped out belief in lands on the other side of the globe, and the discoveries of the Age of Exploration quickly revived the idea of the Unknown Southern Land.

Even da Gama's journey did not dispose of the Southern Continent, for erroneous beliefs of that sort, when disproved, have a way of donning false whiskers and trying again and again to get back into intellectual respectability in disguise. Thus Ortelius's map showed Terra Australis as including the actual Antarctica, Australia, Java, and Tierra del Fuego; one of his captions even asserted that it was inhabited by gigantic parrots. Magellan had indeed thought while sailing through the strait named for him that the land on his left was a headland of Terra Australis. He named it Tierra del Fuego, "Land of Fire," because at night he saw so many of the campfires wherewith the primitive Fuegians were trying to keep warm in their lean-tos.

And even the discovery of the fact that Tierra del Fuego was an island failed to kill Terra Australis. For instance, in 1576 Juan Fernandez reported a continent about where Easter Island lies, with "the mouths of very large rivers . . . the people so white and so well clad" that he was amazed. Presumably he had sighted Easter Island, and an optimistic imagination worthy of a realtor had converted this little grassy island into a well-watered continent and its

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handful of Polynesian fishermen into a mighty nation of Caucasoids. Juan had achieved notoriety some years before by sailing wide of the South American coast in order to take advantage of the winds, and in consequence made such good time from Callao to Chile (thirty days) that on his arrival he was seized by the Inquisition on suspicion of witchcraft. Having convinced the Holy Office that he had not traded his soul to the Devil for seamanship, he wanted to go back for another look at his continent, but died before he got around to it.

Even after Australia was found, stories of a much larger continent in the South Pacific persisted until Captain James Cook settled the matter in the 1760's and 70's by sailing back and forth over the area until no large unexplored sections remained. It is a pity that Terra Australis does not exist, for it would be much more interesting than the vast wet waste of howling winds and mountainous waves that occupies most of the area fancy had assigned to this mysterious southland.

INTEREST in Atlantis revived with the discovery of the Americas and since then has grown to the proportions of a neurosis. In 1553, [illegible] years after Columbus's discoveries, Spanish historian Francisco Gómara, in his *Gen[illegible]he Indes*, suggested [illegible]ntis and the new con[illegible]he and the same; or [illegible]lato must have heard some rumor of real transatlantic continents and based his romance upon it. This theory received further impetus from the discovery that the Aztecs had a legend of having migrated from a place called Aztlan ("Plan of Reeds") and that *atl* was a common syllable in their language, meaning "water" by itself. The idea therefore caught hold. In 1561 Guillaume de Postel made the pleasing suggestion of naming one of the new continents "Atlantis," and in 1580 the English wizard John Dee applied this name to America on one of his maps. In 1689 the French cartographers Sanson, and in 1769 Robert de Vangoudy, went Dee one better by publishing maps of America showing how Poseidon divided the land up among his ten sons, for which Vangoudy was justly ridiculed by Voltaire.

The Atlantis-in-America theory had a fair run, being adopted by Sir Francis Bacon for his unfinished utopian romance *The New Atlantis*, and explained by John Swan in his *Speculum Mundi* (1644) as follows: ". . . this I may think may be supposed, that *America* was sometimes part of that great land which *Plato* calleth the Atlantick island, and that the Kings of that island had some intercourse between the people of *Europe* and *Africa*. . . . But when it happened that this island became a sea, time wore out the remembrance of remote countreys: and that upon this occasion, namely by reason of the mud and dirt, and other rubbish of this kind. For when it sunk, it became a sea, which at first was full

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of mud; and thereupon could not be sailed, until a long time after: yea so long, that such as were the seamen in those dayes, were either dead before the sea came to be clear again, or else sunk with the island: the residue, being little expert in the art of navigation, might, as necessitie taught them, sail in certain boats from island to island; but not venturing further, their memorie perished. . . . Yet that such an island was, and swallowed by an earthquake, I am verily perswaded: and if *America* joyned not to the West part of it, yet surely it could not be farre distant, because *Plato* describes it as a great island: neither do I think that there was much sea between *Africa* and the said island."

Subsequently the theory was accepted by Buffon in the eighteenth century and by Jacob Krüger and Alexander von Humboldt in the nineteenth. About 1855 the German poet Robert Prutz not only located Atlantis in America, but also worked out an elaborate scheme to show that the Phoenicians discovered America, using all the scraps of ancient literature that could be bent to his purpose.

However, since Prutz's time few have adhered to this theory. From the scientific point of view it has too many facts against it: that the native American civilizations were barely rising from barbarism in Plato's time; that they never developed the material technics to mount military expeditions across an ocean; that before Plato's time Mediterranean ships could not go across the Atlantic and back. They could not row it because they could not carry enough food and water for the rowers, and they could not sail it because tacking against the wind had not yet been invented.

On the other hand, from the romantic-occult point of view Atlantis-in-America is too tame and prosaic a solution of the problem. During the last century the romantic and occult Atlantists have preferred to regard the native Amerindian civilizations as colonies of Atlantis.

A body of speculative thought like Atlantism, as it grows, branches out in all directions like a bush, and only rarely does a branch bear the flower of a genuine scientific or historical discovery. In studying this particular bush we shall have to follow each branch out to its tip, then back-track to a fork and follow another branch. Although the Atlantis-in-America branch has long since ended in a dry twig, the related branch that conceived both the Amerindian and Old-World civilizations as offshoots of Atlantis is still a gaudy green, and perhaps the lustiest branch on the whole unearthly shrub; devotees of the theory include the late Charles Gates Dawes, onetime Vice-President of the United States. Let us trace this branch out.

This school of thought, like Atlantis-in-America, goes back to years following the voyages of lumbus. The finding of the Am loosed a regular flood of pseu entific speculation about th

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of the Amerinds. Theologians who had been denying that people could live in the Antipodes, embarrassed by the new discoveries, came forth with the opinion that the redskins were a separate species of mankind whom the Devil had made for his own sinful purposes. This theory was not unpopular with our own Anglo-Saxon forebears, since it gave them an excuse to slaughter the poor aborigines on sight.

Others again have supposed the Indians to be the descendants of Egyptians, Negroes, Phoenicians, Assyrians, East Indians, Polynesians, and the natives of lost continents, or have even believed them to have evolved from a distinct line of apes or monkeys. When Europeans began to explore the New World, persons meeting the American natives for the first time jumped to the premature conclusions that they were speaking Welsh and were therefore the descendants of Prince Madoc and his band, who in Welsh legend were supposed to have crossed the Atlantic in 1170; or were practicing Hebrew religious rites and were the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. These speculations have continued down to the present, despite the fact that science has pretty well established that (as Sir Paul Rycaut surmised in the seventeenth century) the American Indians belong to the Mongoloid or Yellow Race along with the Eskimos, Chinese, and Malays, and that they came from Siberia via Alaska.

Much of this pseudo-scientific activity stems from the work of one man, Diego de Landa, a Spanish monk who came in with the *conquistadores* and became, first Prior of the monastery of Izmal, then Provincial, and finally Bishop of Yucatán. The Mayan Indians over whom he presided had a considerable native literature, written on books made of long strips of native paper folded zig-zag and bound between a pair of wooden covers, which dealt with their history, astronomy, and other subjects. Landa, determined to wipe out "heathen" culture and substitute Christian European civilization, burnt all these books he could find from 1562 onwards. He explains that: "We found a large number of books in these characters and, as they contained nothing in which there were not to be seen superstition and lies of the devil, we burned them all, which they regretted to an amazing degree, and which caused them much affliction." For this vandalism Landa was criticized by some of his own Spanish colleagues, and has been consigned to his own Christian Hell by scholars ever since.

Subsequently Landa became interested in the Mayan culture and undertook to learn the Mayan writing. The Mayas used a complicated system of ideographic signs, compounded together with some phonetic elements to make complex word-glyphs, something like the systems employed in early Egyptian and modern Japanese writing. Landa, however, assumed that Mayan, like the Spanish and Latin he knew, was written with a phonetic alphabet.

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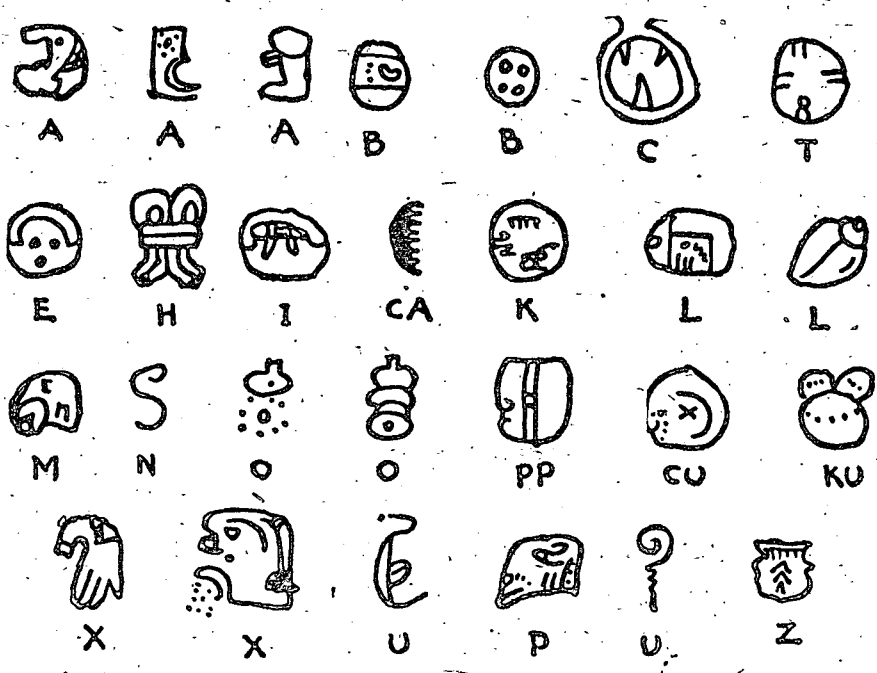

THE "MAYAN ALPHABET" transcribed by Bishop Diego de Landa for his *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán.*

Apparently his method was to drag in some literate Maya, explain what he wanted, and bark: *"Qué es A?"*

The poor Amerind, doubtless shaking in his sandals for fear of being burnt as a heretic, thought the terrible old man wanted the sign for *aac,* "turtle." Therefore he drew the ideograph, a turtle's head.

"Qué es B?"

Now, *be* in Mayan (pronounced "bay") means "road," so the Maya drew the ideograph for "road"—a pair of parallel lines representing a path, and between them the outline of a human footprint. And so on through the alphabet, until Landa had 27 signs and a few compounds, most of which however did not mean what he thought they did. He also took down a correct explanation of the Mayan numerals.

In the 1560's Landa was recalled to Spain on charges of exceeding his authority, and in preparing his defence (a successful one, I am sorry to say) he wrote a great treatise on the Maya civilization, *Relación de las*

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Cosas de Yucatán, or *Account of the Affairs of Yucatán,* wherein he set forth his "Mayan alphabet." This book is still one of the most valuable sources on Mayan culture and history. He wrote: "Some of the old people of Yucatán say that they have heard from their ancestors that this land was occupied by a race of people, who came from the East and whom God had delivered by opening twelve paths through the sea. If this were true, it necessarily follows that all the inhabitants of the Indes are descendants of the Jews. . . ."

Thus he gave the initial push to another pseudo-scientific theory: that the Amerinds were the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. For many centuries men had been speculating about the eventual fate of the 27,290 Israelites whom Sargon of Assyria had deported from the northern Hebrew kingdom of Samaria about 719 B.C. and settled "in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." Jewish and Christian speculators supposed these displaced tribesmen to be lurking in the wilds of Asia or Africa, and looked forward, the Jews with hope and the Christians with fear, to their reappearance on the stage of the world.

The Jewish-Indian theory was floated by Landa and some other Spanish missionaries like Durán, and later by the adventurer Aaron Levi, who told the learned rabbi Manasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam a romantic tale of his visit to a brotherhood of Jewish Indians in Peru, descendants of the Tribe of Reuben. Manasseh published this tale as a book, *The Hope of Israel,* which interested some Puritan ministers in England. The latter wrote Manasseh and brought the theory to Oliver Cromwell's attention. Cromwell invited Manasseh to England and formed such a firm friendship with him that he tried to have the Jews readmitted to England, though he was able to effect this on a small scale only.

It was even suggested that the Amerinds should return to Palestine, but luckily for the peace of the world they showed no interest in the idea.

The Jewish-Indian theory led an active life for over two centuries, being adopted by William Penn among others. The last prominent Amerind-Israelite, Lord Kingsborough, spent his entire fortune of £40,000 a century ago publishing *The Antiquities of Mexico,* a monumental work in nine immense volumes containing reproductions of Aztec picture-writings and art-objects, and notes expounding the Jewish-Indian theory. Kingsborough's obsession was literally the death of him, for it landed him in Dublin's debtor's prison for non-payment of the bills incurred in publishing this work, and there he expired.

Since then others have identified the Lost Tribes with the Zulus, Burmese, Japanese, Papuans, and other peoples. During the last century the noisiest branch of the cult has been that which finds the Lost Ten in the present inhabitant of the British Isles: the Anglo-Israelites or British-

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Israelites. This sect was founded about 1795 by Richard Brothers, an ornament of several lunatic-asylums who also proclaimed himself the Nephew of God (a relationship to puzzle the acutest theologian) and the divinely appointed Prince of the Hebrews and Ruler of the World. Brothers even tried to induce the mad George III to abdicate so that he, Brothers, could take over, and was locked up as a dangerous madman.

All these identifications lack the slightest scientific merit, being based upon wrong ideas of history, anthropology, linguistics, and Biblical interpretation. There is not the least doubt that Sargon's deportees did just what other tribes broken up by conquest and migration have done: They settled down in their new homes, intermarried with their neighbors, and gradually lost their original language, culture, and religion. As a result, the people of modern Iran and Iraq are all partly descended from them.

Such arguments have not stopped the hunt for the Lost Ten Tribes, however, just as no amount of argument will stop the search for Atlantis, since such activities are inspired by an emotional animus that mere facts cannot touch. While Ten Tribism impinges upon Atlantism at several points, the two cults are somewhat mutually exclusive, since Ten Tribism assumes a Fundamentalist-Christian view of the Bible, while Atlantism takes a cavalier attitude towards that discovered anthology of early Hebrew literature and, reversing the argument of Kosmas Indikopleustes, asserts that the Biblical Flood story is but a distorted account of the sinking of Atlantis.

TO return to the Mayas and their oppressors: After Landa's time knowledge of Mayan writing was lost, as the Catholic priests continued their campaign against Mayan literature and the Mayas themselves dropped their native writing for the easier Latin alphabet, which the priests adapted to the Mayan language. (They used the letter *x* to represent the *sh* sound; hence all those *x's* in Middle American names like Uxmal, pronounced "*oosh*-mahl," and Xiu, "she-*yoo*.") Only three Mayan books survived: the Dresden Codex, the Codex Perezianus in Paris, and the Tro-Cortesianus Codex in two sections (since reunited) in Madrid. Nobody could read any of them, nor could they read any of the many inscriptions which survived on Mayan monuments. Landa's treatise also disappeared, and the original has never been found though competently searched for.

Mayan writing remained completely mysterious until in 1864 a diligent but erratic French scholar, the Abbé Charles-Etienne Brasseur (called "de Bourbourg") discovered an abridged copy of Landa's *Relación* in the library of the Historical Academy of Madrid. Brasseur (1814-1874) had travelled extensively in the New World, had held an administrative post in Maximilian's short-lived

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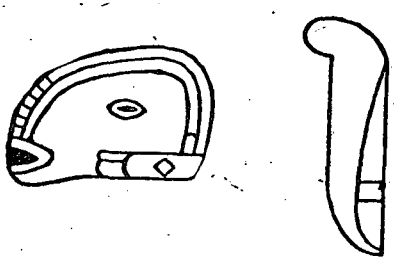
Mexican empire, and had written many works including historical novels under the pen-name of "de Ravensberg" and an introduction to a book by that gifted old charlatan Waldeck, of whom more later.

When Brasseur found Landa's "Mayan alphabet" he was overjoyed, thinking he had the Rosetta Stone, the key, to Mayan writing. He tried at once to read the Troano Codex (one of the halves of the Tro-Cortesianus) by this alphabet with the help of an uncontrolled imagination.

The result was an incoherent description of a volcanic catastrophe, beginning: "The master is he of the upheaved earth, the master of the calabash, the earth upheaved of the tawny beast (at the place engulfed beneath the floods); it is he, the master of the upheaved earth, of the swollen earth, beyond measure, he the master . . . of the basin of water."

In going over the manuscript Brasseur came across the following pair of symbols:



which he was otherwise unable to account for. Now, if you compare them with Landa's alphabet you will see that the one on the left bears a faint (but only faint) resemblance to Landa's "M" and the other to his "U." By a magnificent conclusion-jump Brasseur inferred that these symbols spelled the name of the land submerged by the catastrophe: *Mu*.

He also, in another book, meaningfully pointed out resemblances between Plato's Atlantis and the underground empire of Xibalba in the *Popol Vuh*, a creation-myth and pseudo-history of the Mayas' neighbors the Kichés, which he had also translated and published. That was as far as Brasseur went into Atlantism.

Discovery of the Landa "alphabet" caused a natural stir among historians and archeologists, followed by a heavy disappointment when they found that trying to read Mayan by this key resulted in sheer gibberish. The efforts of other French students like Léon de Rosny to decipher Mayan writing also proved abortive. However, by diligent study over the last seventy-five years, scholars like Förstemann, Bowditch, and Morley have deciphered over a third of the Mayan gyphs. This is not enough to read off Mayan texts, but enough to give a glimmering of what they are about. Hence it is now known that the Troano Codex is no description of an eruption, but a treatise on astrology. The Dresden Codex is astronomical, and the Perezianus ritualistic. The inscriptions on monuments are mostly concerned with calendric and liturgical matters.

Despite the discrediting of Brasseur's translation, his theories were

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further developed by two great pseudo-scientific Atlantists, Donnelly and Le Plongeon, remarkable characters apart from their contributions to Atlantism.

Ignatius T. T. Donnelly (1831-1901) was a man "with an extremely active mind, but possessing also that haste to form judgments and that lack of critical sense in testing them, which are often the result of self-education conducted by immense and unsystematic reading." Born in Philadelphia, he went into law, and in 1856 emigrated to Minnesota, where he settled in Nininger, near St. Paul, and started a small-town journal. At 28 he was elected Lieutenant-Governor of Minnesota. Thence he was sent to Congress, and for eight years, when not attending upon the nation's business, spent his time in the Library of Congress soaking up information and becoming perhaps the most erudite man ever to sit in the House of Representatives.

When finally defeated in 1870, Donnelly retired to his rambling mansion to write the first of several very successful books: *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World,* brought out by Harper in 1882, which went through at least fifty printings, the latest in 1949. He followed it with *Ragnarok, The Age of Fire and Ice,* which argued (wrongly) that the Pleistocene Ice Age was brought on by the collision of the earth with a comet, and *The Great Cryptogram,* which undertook to prove by cryptographic methods that Sir Francis Bacon had written the plays attributed to William Shakespeare.

This last theory had been suggested as a joke by Walpole in the previous century. A few decades before Donnelly's book appeared, the idea was submitted seriously by several people such as Delia Bacon, a puritanical Boston schoolteacher shocked by the notion that the author of the wonderful plays and sonnets could have been an associate of a lot of vulgar, dissipated actors. While Miss Bacon did not herself urge Sir Francis as a substitute, others like William H. Smith in England soon added this feature.

Donnelly's immense work labored to prove that—Bacon had revealed himself in cipher throughout the plays; but a cruel cryptographer soon pointed out that by Donnelly's loose methods you could prove just as conclusively that Shakespeare wrote the Forty-Sixth Psalm. The 46th word from the beginning of this psalm is "shake"; the 46th word from the end is "spear"; Q.E.D.!

Despite such criticisms Baconianism grew to a major cult which survives as an active rival of the Atlantist and Ten Tribist cults. It has even branched out into heretical schools who hold that Shakespeare's works were written, not by Bacon, but by the Earl of Oxford or some other Elizabethan worthy; or who infer that Bacon wrote the works not only of Shakespeare but also those of his contemporaries Burton, Jonson, Peele, Greene, Marlowe, and Spenser. The logic is equally good

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in either case. The last is of course a reduction to absurdity, since Bacon could not possibly have led the active political career he did, written his own voluminous works, and also have found time to write the works of seven of the most prolific authors in the history of English literature.

Donnelly, a chubby, clean-shaven man who looked a little like his younger contemporary William Jennings Bryan, continued to lead a phenomenally active existence for the rest of his long life. He went on lecture tours and wrote several more books, including a prophetic novel, *Caesar's Column: A Story of the Twentieth Century,* which sold about a million copies. He was also elected Minnesota State Senator, helped found the Populist Party, and twice ran for Vice-President of the United States on the Populist ticket.

Donnelly thus bore the distinction of having made perhaps the greatest single contributions to two schools of speculative thought, the Atlantist and the Baconian. Atlantism had been mildly active for about three centuries, mainly among scholars of the more unworldly type. Some like Father Kircher had taken Plato's story at face value, while some considered it a fiction, perhaps, as Bartoli suggested, a satire on Athenian political conflicts. Some like Voltaire wavered, whereas some thought the story not literally true but based upon real legends with a historical foundation of fallen empires in Africa and other places.

It remained for Donnelly to convert Atlantism into a popular cult. His work expanded upon the theory, already put forward by his fellow-Americans Hosea and Thompson (and for that matter by Count Carli a century earlier) that the Mayan and other early civilizations were derived from Atlantis. Edward H. Thompson, then an undergraduate at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, had argued in an article in *Popular Science Monthly* that refugees from the sinking of Atlantis had landed in North America, spread to Lake Superior, and then been forced by the attacks of hostile tribes to migrate to Yucatán. Thompson later became an archeologist and one of the leading authorities on the Mayas, dropping all Atlantist doctrines.

Donnelly began by asserting thirteen "theses," as follows:

"1. That there once existed in the Atlantic Ocean, opposite the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea, a large island, which was the remnant of an Atlantic continent, and known to the ancient world at Atlantis.

"2. That the description of this island given by Plato is not, as has long been supposed, fable, but veritable history.

"3. That Atlantis was the region where man first rose from a state of barbarism to civilization.

"4. That it became, in the course of ages, a populous and mighty nation, from whose overflowings the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, the Mississippi River, the Amazon, the Pacific coast of South America, the Mediterranean, the west coast of Eu-

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rope and Africa, the Baltic, the Black Sea, and the Caspian were populated by civilized nations.

"5. That it was the true Antediluvian world; the Garden of Eden; the Gardens of the Hesperides; the Elysian Fields; the Gardens of Alcinous; the Mesomphalos; the Olympos; the Asgard of the traditions of the ancient nations; representing a universal memory of a great land, where early mankind dwelt for ages in peace and happiness.

"6. That the gods and goddesses of the ancient Greeks, the Phoenicians, the Hindoos, and the Scandinavians were simply the kings, queens, the heroes of Atlantis; and the acts attributed to them in mythology are a confused recollection of real historical events.

"7. That the mythology of Egypt and Peru represented the original religion of Atlantis, which was sun-worship.

"8. That the oldest colony formed by the Atlanteans was probably in Egypt, whose civilization was a reproduction of that of the Atlantic island.

"9. That the implements of the 'Bronze Age' of Europe were derived from Atlantis. The Atlanteans were also the first manufacturers of iron.

"10. That the Phoenician alphabet, parent of all European alphabets, was derived from an Atlantis alphabet, which was also conveyed from Atlantis to the Mayas of Central America.

"11. That Atlantis was the original seat of the Aryan or Indo-European family of nations, as well as of the Semitic peoples, and possibly also of the Turanian races.

"12. That Atlantis perished in a terrible convulsion of nature, in which the whole island sunk into the ocean, with nearly all its inhabitants.

"13. That a few persons escaped in ships and on rafts, and carried to the nations east and west tidings of the appalling catastrophe, which has survived to our own time in the Flood and Deluge legends of the different nations of the old and new worlds."

These theses are worth examining with some care, since they represent what you might call the centrist position on Atlantis, as distinct from the occult left-wing and the scientific right-wing. Most non-occult Atlantist books issued since Donnelly's time take essentially his position and draw heavily upon him for material. On the other hand, note that Donnelly goes far beyond Plato, who never claimed that Atlantis was the source of all civilization.

After quoting from the pertinent parts of *Timaios* and *Kritias*, Donnelly undertook to prove his theses. For one thing, he said, the lack of magical or fantastic elements in Plato's story is evidence of its truth, and the present submarine topography around the Azores corresponds with Plato's island. He argued that continents have risen and sunk thousands of feet during geological eras (true), and islands have risen and sunk in a matter of hours during volcanic eruptions (true);

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therefore, why could not a continent have sunk out of sight as a result of a single eruption or earthquake? Earthquakes such as that of Lisbon in 1775 had certainly had devastating effects. "We conclude," he said, "therefore: 1. That it is proven beyond question, by geological evidence, that vast masses of land once existed in the region where Atlantis is located by Plato, and that therefore such an island must have existed; 2. That there is nothing improbable or impossible in the statment that it was destroyed suddenly by an earthquake in one dreadful night and day."

Unfortunately he did not prove anything of the sort. He merely raised some inconclusive arguments to show the possibility of such a land; something quite different.

Then Donnelly set forth resemblances between many species of American and European plants and animals, and cited various authorities to show that certain plants like tobacco, guava, and cotton were not, as was generally thought, confined to one hemisphere before Columbus, but were grown in both the New and Old Worlds. The Assyrians, for example, had the pineapple. The Deluge-legends of the Jews, Babylonians, Aztecs, and others all point to the submergence of Atlantis, whose culture at its best has not been surpassed.

Donnelly thought that the Egyptian civilization blossomed all at once instead of evolving slowly, thereby showing that it was imported, and anticipated the modern ultra-diffusionists by asserting: "I cannot believe that the great inventions were duplicated spontaneously . . . in different countries. . . . If this were so, all savages would have invented the boomerang; all savages would possess pottery, bows and arrows, slings, tents, and canoes. . . ."

Like the diffusionists, Donnelly inferred that, because similar culture-traits among various European peoples can be traced to a common origin, the same was true for similar culture-traits among the peoples of the New and Old Worlds. Then he cited the occurrence on both sides of the Atlantic of pillars, pyramids, burial-mounds, metallurgy, the arts, agriculture, ships, and so on through the whole range of human culture-traits.

To show that the Old-World alphabets that descended from the Phoenician (including our own) originated in Atlantis, Donnelly printed tables in which the Latin alphabet is lined up alongside Landa's "Mayan alphabet" as published inaccurately by Brasseur de Bourbourg. The two don't look the least bit alike, but that did not stop Donnelly, who took pieces out of the Mayan glyphs and distorted them to create "intermediate forms" between the Latin and supposed Mayan letters.

Then he reconstructed the history of Atlantis by assuming that all Old-World myths like those of *Genesis* were distorted bits of Atlantean history; Poseidon, Thor, Melkarth, and other Old-World gods were Atlantean

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kings; the Titans of Greek myth and the Fomorians (the "m" is pronounced like a "w") of Irish myth were Atlanteans, and so on.

Finally, he clinched his case by linguistic arguments purporting to prove that various New-World languages are closely related to tongues of the Old World. Le Plongeon (to whom we shall come) is quoted as saying that: "One third of [the Maya] tongue is pure Greek" (though actually it would be hard to find two languages less alike); A Señor Melgor of Mexico says Chiapanec, a Central American language, resembles Hebrew; the Otomi language of Mexico is related to the Chinese.

Since Donnelly's formidable learning is likely to stun the average reader into taking his statements at face value, a close look at his book is needed to show how careless, tendentious, and generally worthless it is. For instance, to point out that both Europeans and Amerinds used spears and sails; that both practiced marriage and divorce; and that both believed in ghosts and flood-legends, proves nothing about sunken continents, but only that the people in question were all human beings, since all these customs and beliefs are practically world-wide.

Most of Donnelly's statements of fact, to tell the truth, either were wrong when he made them, or have been disproved by subsequent discoveries.

It is not true, as he stated, that the Peruvian Indians had a system of writing, that the cotton-plants native to the New and Old Worlds belong to the same species, that Egyptian civilization sprang suddenly into being, or that Hannibal used gunpowder in his military operations. Donnelly's "Assyrian pineapples" are nothing but the date-palms represented in Assyrian art. When he tried to show the resemblance between Otomi and Chinese by parallel tables of words, I don't know what he used for Chinese—certainly not the standard Northern Chinese, the language usually meant by the term. For instance he gave the Chinese words for "head," "night," "tooth," "man," and "I as *ten, siao, tien, na,* and *nugo,* when they should be *tou, ye, ya, jen* (or *ren*) and *wo.*

This common mistake about the relationship of Otomi to the languages of East Asia seems to rise from the fact that Otomi, like Chinese, has phonemic tones: the pitch at which a syllable is pronounced affects its meaning. Some speculators have inferred from this fact that Otomi must be related to Chinese or to Japanese, a surmise that is not borne out by even a slight acquaintance with these languages. Anyway, phonemic tones are nothing unique; many African languages are also polytonic.

For all its shortcomings, however, Donnelly's book became the New Testament of Atlantism, just as the *Timaios* and *Kritias* are its Old Testament, and year after year Atlantists repeat that Otomi is archaic Chinese or Japanese.

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DONNELLY'S contemporary Augustus Le Plongeon (1826-1908) was the first to excavate Mayan ruins in Yucatán, where he lived for many years.

A sad-eyed French physician with a magnificent beard down to his navel and a handsome American wife much younger than himself, Le Plongeon was an expert in his own curious way. Although he was familiar at first hand with the customs and speech of the Mayas, his work proved abortive, for he failed to achieve the scientific recognition he sought. He also suffered from the rapacity of Mexican officials, who in those days had the cruel custom of letting gringo archeologists dig till they found something interesting, and then confiscating their finds and harrying them from the country.

From Brasseur's attempted translation of the Troano Codex, and from some pictures on the walls of the ruins at the Mayan city of Chichén-Itzá, Le Plongeon, an even more extravagant extrapolator than Donnelly, built a romantic tale of the rivalry of the princes Coh ("Puma") and Aac ("Turtle") for the hand of their sister Móo, Queen of Atlantis or Mu. Coh won, but was murdered by Aac, who conquered the country from Móo. Then as the countinent foundered Móo fled to Egypt, where she built the Sphinx as a memorial to her brother-husband and, under the name of Isis, founded the Egyptian civilization. (In cold fact the Sphinx is probably a monument to King Khafra of the Fourth Dynasty.) Other Muvians had meanwhile settled in Central America, where they became the Mayas of history.

Le Plongeon incorporated these fantasies in several books. When his small volume *Sacred Mysteries Among the Mayas and the Quiches 11,500 Years Ago* (1886) appeared, serious students naturally hooted. Thereupon the enraged Le Plongeon wrote a much bigger book, *Queen Móo and the Egyptian Sphinx*, wherein he denounced the "arrogance and self-conceit of superficial learning" displayed by the "pretended authorities," meaning Brinton and other Americanists.

Like Brasseur, Le Plongeon tried to translate the Troano Codex. The result, if no more reliable scientifically, was at least more intelligible: "In the year 6 Kan, on the 11th Muluc in the month Zac, there occurred terrible earthquakes, which continued without interruption until the 13th Chuen. The country of the hills of mud, the land of Mu was sacrificed: being twice upheaved it suddenly disappeared during the night, the basin being continually shaken by the volcanic forces. Being confined, these caused the land to sink and to rise several times in various places. At last the surface gave way and ten countries were torn asunder and scattered. Unable to stand the force of the convulsion, they sank with their 64,000,000 of inhabitants 8060 years before the writing of this book."

He also derived Freemasonry and the Metric System from the Mayas,

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took Mme. Blavatsky's imaginary *Book of Dzyan* seriously as "an ancient Sanskrit book," asserted that the Greek alphabet was really a Mayan poem dealing with the sinking of Mu, and printed a photograph of an Old-World leopard as an example of Central American fauna. As authorities he cited people like the London publisher John Taylor ("the learned English astronomer," Le Plongeon called him) and the eccentric Scottish astronomer Charles Piazzi Smyth ("the well-known Egyptologist") who between them founded the pseudo-scientific cult of pyramidology.

According to their teachings the Great Pyramid of King Khufu at Gizeh was really built by Noah or some other Old-Testament patriarch under divine guidance, and its measurements (which they gave with incredible inaccuracy) incorporated the wisdom of the ages and prophesied the future of mankind. Although none of the pyramidologists' predictions has come true, they are still active in the business of prophecy-mongering.

THE next worker of this particular vein of pseudo-science was Dr. Paul Schliemann, grandson of the great Heinrich Schliemann, the small nervous retired German businessman who founded the modern science of archeology by digging up ancient Troy and Mykenai. In 1912 the younger Schliemann, apparently getting tired of being a little man with a big name, sold the *New York American* an article entitled *How I Discovered Atlantis, the Source of All Civilization.*

Schliemann said that his grandfather had left him a batch of papers on archeological matters and an owl-headed vase of ancient provenance. The envelope containing the papers bore a warning that the envelope should only be opened by a member of Schliemann's family willing to swear to devote his life to research into the matters dealt with in the papers inside. Paul Schliemann took the pledge and opened the envelope.

The first instruction was to break open the vase. Inside he found some square coins of platinum-aluminum-silver alloy, and a metal plate inscribed, in Phoenician: "Issued in the Temple of Transparent Walls." Among his grandfather's notes he came across an account of finding a large bronze vase on the site of Troy, in which were coins and other artifacts of metal, bone, and pottery. The vase and some of the subjects were inscribed: "From the King Cronos of Atlantis."

Schliemann gushed: "You can imagine my excitement; here was the first material evidence of that great continent whose legend has lived for ages. . . ." He went on to advance the usual arguments, taken without credit from Donnelly and Le Plongeon, for a common origin of New and Old-World cultures in Atlantis. Like Le Plongeon he claimed to have read the Troano Codex—in the British Museum, though it was in Madrid all the time. The story of the

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dunking of Mu contained therein he corroborated by a 4000-year-old Chaldean manuscript from a Buddhist temple in Lhasa, Tibet, of all places, which told how the Land of the Seven Cities was destroyed by earthquake and eruption after the star Bel fell, while Mu, the priest of Ra, told the terrified people that he had warned them.

Schliemann promised to reveal the full story of his discoveries in a book that would Tell All about Atlantis. He ended significantly: "But if I desired to say everything I know, there would be no more mystery about it." Alas, the book never appeared; nor were there any further revelations; nor did the owl-headed vase, the Chaldean manuscript, and the other priceless relics ever see the light of scientific investigation. Queried about the matter, Heinrich Schliemann's collaborator Wilhelm Dörpfeld wrote that so far as he knew the elder Schliemann never displayed any special interest in Atlantis and had not done any original work on the subject. The evident fact that the whole thing was a hoax has not stopped Atlantists from quoting the younger Schliemann as an authority, sometimes confusing him with his grandfather.

THE last and gaudiest blossom on this particular branch is the late James Churchward, a small wraith-like Anglo-American, who in his younger days wrote *A Big Game and Fishing Guide to North-Eastern Maine* for the Bangor and Aroostock R. R., and in later years called himself "Colonel" and claimed to have traveled widely in Asia and Central America (where he was attacked by a flying snake). In his seventies Churchward burst into print with *The Lost Continent of Mu* (1926) and other Mu books published subsequently. Deriving his ideas mainly from Le Plongeon and Paul Schliemann, Churchward expanded upon them by assuming two sunken continents, Atlantis in the Atlantic and Mu (corresponding to the occultists' Lemuria) in the Central Pacific, where for geological reasons we can be reasonably sure there never has been a continent and never will be one.

Churchward shared the favorite obsession of the occultists that there was once a universal esoteric language of symbols which the ancients used in recording their secret wisdom, and that by staring at ancient symbols long enough an intuitively gifted person can conjure their meanings out of his inner consciousness and thus recover forgotten historical facts. Now, the ancients did use many symbols, just as we do with our flags and trademarks. But, unless one knows a culture intimately, one cannot tell whether some bit of antique decoration symbolized anything or was just put there to look pretty. If you think you can interpret symbols subjectively, try your skill on a page of written Chinese, without knowing in advance how to read that language. A Chinese ideograph is merely a conventionalized picture —exactly the sort of thing Church-

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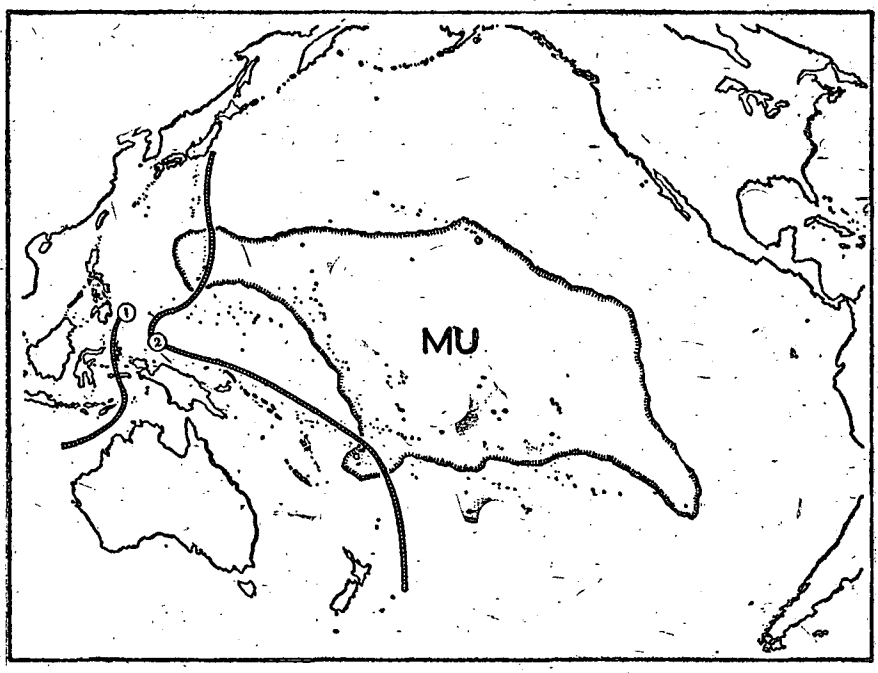

MAP OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN, showing (1) Wallace's Line, (2) the Andesite Line, and Churchward's lost continent of Mu.

ward claimed to be able to interpret.

As an example, Churchward asserted that the rectangle stood for the letter M in the Muvian alphabet, and therefore for Mu itself. As the ordinary brick is entirely bounded by rectangles, you can see that he had no trouble in deriving everybody and everything from Mu. Moreover he misquoted Plato ("in Plato's *Timeus Critias* [sic] we find this reference to the lost continent: 'The Land of Mu had ten peoples.' " etc.) and printed nonsensical footnotes reading "4. Greek record." or "6. Various records." When he printed a table of forty-two Egyptian hieroglyphs, only six of them were even remotely correct.

Churchward said that he based his theory upon two sets of "tablets." One of these appears to exist, being a collection of objects found in Mexico by an American engineer named Niven. The objects look to the uninitiated eye like the flattened figurines which the Aztecs, Zapotecs, and other Mexican tribes made in great numbers for religious purposes; but to Churchward they are

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tablets, and their bumps and curlicues Muvian symbols conveying esoteric meanings.

The other set is more recondite: the "Naacal tablets . . . written with the Naga symbols and characters" which a friendly temple priest showed Churchward in India. That is, in one book he tells of seeing them in India, and in another book in Tibet. By a lucky coincidence Churchward had just been studying the "dead language" with which these tablets were inscribed, and hence could read their account of the Creation and of the submergence of Mu.

From these sources Churchward learned that Mu was a large Pacific continent, stretching from the Hawaiian Islands to the Fijis and from Easter Island to the Marianas; low and flat because mountains had not yet been invented, and covered with lush tropical vegetation. In its days of glory Mu supported sixty-four million souls, divided into ten tribes and ruled by a priest-emperor called the Ra. While Muvians came in several colors, the Whites dominated the rest. They not only possessed a high civilization, but also practiced the pure Aryan monotheistic religion, which Jesus Christ later tried to revive. Savagery had never existed, for Churchward, who had no use for the "monkey theories" of science, held that man was specifically created, fully civilized, in the Pliocene.

Mu sent out colonies under the guidance of its priests, the Nagas or Naacals. Some of these emigrants went to Atlantis via the inland sea

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that then occupied the Amazon basin, while others settled in Asia, where they built a great Uighur Empire 20,000 years ago. (History, by the way, does know a real Uighur Empire—which however rose in the tenth century A.D. and fell in the twelfth, and so has nothing to do with Churchward.)

Then, 13,000 years ago, the "gas-belts," great caves underlying much of the earth, collapsed, letting Mu and Atlantis sink and making mountains in the other continents. The surviving Muvians, crowded on to the small islands of Polynesia, took to eating each other for want of other nourishment, and not only they but most of the Muvian colonies fell to the level of savages.

Like Le Plongeon, Churchward took the *Book of Dzyan* seriously, though he did not approve of it. In fact he referred to it as "nonsense" and "the writings of a disordered brain, wandering about in a fog." Perhaps he was jealous, though he need not have been. After all, several of his own bizarre brainstorms are still sold, while the few good books on Atlantism, like those of Bramwell and Björkman, have long since gone out of print.

No fervent believer in Mu, it seems, will give up his belief merely for the sake of a few facts. Thus Churchward's pseudoscientific masterpieces have begotten progeny, in the pamphlets published by Dr. Louis R. Effler, who flies about the world looking for the Muvian spiral symbol, and in the Alley Oop comic strip, whose hardboiled hero is a skin-clad native of a dinosaur-infested Mu. And in 1947 F. Bruce Russell, described as a "retired Los Angeles psychoanalyst," announced that he had found mummies eight to nine feet tall, from the lost continent of Mu, near St. George, Utah. Evidently Mu, despite anything we can do about it, marches on.

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BEYOND

MANY THOUSANDS *of years ago, the Technicons of the Elder Race did strange things with birth-cells by means of micro-surgery, causing strange mutations. Even on human beings they experimented. The result of one such experiment was Arl, one of the most beautiful of the Variformae, as human as you or I, with one exception—she possessed a lovely, bushy tail. Readers of "I Remember Lemuria!" (a fiction story published in* Amazing Stories *in 1945) will remember her as the wife of Mutan Mion, the Earthman who became an Elder and returned to a devastated Earth to battle Sathanus in "The Return of Sathanas," a sequel to the Lemuria story. This, then, is a new novel (65,000 words) of the further adventures of these two loved characters from the imagination of science fiction's most famous (and some say most notorious) writer.*

By Richard S. Shaver

Mutan Mion

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THE BARRIER

PART I

THERE was a misty indistinctness about the scene, as though it trembled beneath the sweep of invisible rays, heat-like, shimmering. But there was nothing indistinct about the scream that rang through the night. It tremoloed on and out, carrying with it the concept of sheer terror. Yet, nothing was to be seen. Nothing, that is, but the lovely body of Arl of Nor, struggling helplessly in midair, floating above her downy bed.

Suspended! Supported on nothing! Yet held inexorably so that even the motions of her limbs were transfixed, rendered rigid—except for her glossy tail, which swept about frantically, filling the air about her gleaming body with a halo of flowing beauty. However invisible, whatever held her in its grip was real enough, as evidenced by her ringing screams—screams which were suddenly cut off as though she were being strangled, or as though a hand had been clamped over her lips.

Then, before the eyes of the straining watchers, her nude body floated out of the window, into the darkness, and was gone.

* * *

"Gone! Snatched by something not even our best rays could see!"

Nor-Princess Vanue, reclining in ensorceling magnificence, her hair an air-borne golden cloud holding light beams prisoned, shook her head sadly. "How carefully we have watched the ray-record, and not a single clue to help us."

Mutan Mion, sitting beside Vanue on her couch, watched as she regretfully turned off the glowing mist-cloud of the ray-record which she had once more projected, in the vain hope that they would see something that they had missed before. Weeks had now passed since the watch-ray had made its record, brought to a belated but helpless alert by the screams of the kidnaped beauty. "I will never find her!" He slumped beside the Nor-goddess, despair in every line of his magnificent body.

"There is a chance, said Vanue. . . .

"A chance!" Mutan Mion spoke the words bitterly. "What chance without the faintest clue as to who—or what—has taken her, nor *where!*"

Vanue reached out her long fingers and stroked his head gently, twining her index finger in his curly forelock. Her eyes, deep blue gleams above the immortal wonder of her body, now rosy, now golden with shadows from the captive light, now palest magic under moonshine, were blue bearers of wisdom and hope. "But there *is* a clue," she said. "All is not lost . . ."

Mutan Mion leaped to his feet, faced her on her couch. As he stared

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at her huge body, huger by far than his own giant frame, yet ethereally lovely and fragile in spite of thirty feet of height and thousands of years of existence, he felt again the insupportable longing of love Vanue inevitably inspired in lesser breasts. While he stood transfixed, Vanue explained, her slow, sweet-toned words dropping like struck notes from an all-vibrant harp.

"That night when Arl was taken from us, a strange ship was sighted, outward-bound, by the *Peirae* . . ."

"Peirae!" exclaimed Mutan. "Who are the Peirae?"

"My Mutan, heard you never of the Amazons of *Peira?*"

Mutan answered mentally in the negative, and Vanue reached for a bronze wand and tapped a silver bell that hung from the pillar of twining gold-scaled snakes beside her couch. One of the floating-haired Nor witch-maids came on quickly gliding feet across the glittering floor that mirrored every movement in reverse, her face an earnest hope that this call from Vanue would be opportunity to return some part of the value she daily received from Vanue's largesse.

"Bring the new Peiran thought-records for Lord Mion, dear one."

Only a moment they waited, Vanue with a mysterious smile on her glorious lips, Mutan with stark tenseness as renewed, incredulous hope surged through his body. Then the girl came back, flying like an arrow, rather than with her former glide, hastening to be of service to the goddess she loved so greatly.

Vanue placed the thought-record in her ray-cloud projector and snapped the switch. Once more the mysterious vapors of the ray-cloud swirled within the prisoning force-fields, and upon the fluorescing vapors the imaged beings of far-off Peira seemed present in living reality.

"Exquisite!" breathed Mutan Mion impulsively as the scene burst upon his vision. "They're lovely—the loveliest beings I have seen in all the galaxy!" But even in his wonder at their beauty, he leaned forward to see what manner of craft it was, so tiny, on which the shapely, naked Peiran females rode. A tiny disk, it floated them gently through the air as though on a cushion; a cushion on which some reclined, others knelt gracefully, and still others stood as they swooped about in daring abandon.

They were numerous, these delicately beautiful women of Peira. Yet, among them all, there were no men. Not one male figure was among the swarm of Peirae who came floating up through the scented air to greet the incoming craft of the Nor space fleet.

Mutan Mion watched with interest, yet urged to fidgeting by impatience, as the greetings were made, and leaders of both Peira and Nor spacecraft contacted each other. It was obvious from the exchange of reports that were made that this was not the first visit of the Nor craft to Peira, and Mutan wondered mightily about it. Vanue's interests were widespread,

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over the galaxy, but he had not suspected the existence of the Peirae, nor could he fathom Vanue's purpose in contacting them.

"Listen now," commanded Vanue. "This report concerns the ship I mentioned to you . . ."

The Peiran leader, a tiny woman of great beauty, was speaking: "This great ship, seen approaching the Barrier from the direction of Nor, was examined by our watch-ray, and just before she passed beyond range, one of our technicons recorded an image of Vanue, herself. Instantly she knew that one mind aboard that ship, a variform whose beautiful tail attracted her attention, was of Nor, for the impression came to her of a prayer, or a plea for help, directed toward Vanue. We tried to learn more, but we could not reach the ship again. And naturally, when it passed within the Barrier, our chance was gone forever. What it may mean, I do not know, but I made this report to you because of the connection with the name of Vanue . . ."

VANUE snapped off the projection. Mutan Mion whirled to face her.

"What is this Barrier?" he said hoarsely. "And where is it? What lies beyond . . . ?"

Vanue looked at him seriously. "That is one thing I would know, too. Up to now it has been impassable to our greatest science. Lord Mion, I want you to look over Peira for me. There have been dozens of our ships disappear in their star cluster, beside the mystery ship on which I am now sure your Arl was a prisoner. Ships whose course lie too close to the far extent of the Peira cluster seem inevitably to fail to complete their trips. These women might be responsible . . ."

Mutan looked incredulous. "These tiny women? These lovely little beings? But they would not report this ship to you, if they were the guilty ones—and besides, what of this mysterious Barrier . . . ?"

"I don't know. That is what I want you to find out. One can't attack without more proof than I have now. One can't even give the League Courts the responsibility of dealing with the matter without evidence, you know. The Peirae would say that all our ships were caught by the Barrier—and yet I suspect that they have not been."

"It seems incongruous to me. It is even more certain the elders would laugh if we accused the Peirans of piracy. Why should they need to?"

"I have my suspicions, Mutan. These women have no men. They are egg-layers, a race hardly human. They do not act from motives normal to the human heart. They are a product of an experiment in the variform that went wrong. They were not meant to be mono-sexual, but they turned out that way. Like some insects, they have no reproductive need for the male."

"I remember the years of the wars, when the many groups of variforms fought for the right to become nations in their own right. I always

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sympathized with their struggles to form separate races. And I felt that justice had been done when each of the variform races was given their own planet."

"It's a desire easily understood," agreed Vanue. "But it was a development not expected when at first the variform experiments began. You know, they started in order to give mankind the use of the seas as a home. Then, after the successful amphibious man became accepted and the mermen were recognized as a valuable new off-shoot of the human race, there was no stopping the scientists of the technique. They formed a new kind of human for every possible use! Men with four arms for better manipulation of machines. Men with the bodies of snakes to conquer the jungles of the wilderness planets! The use of the process had to be proscribed by the League Courts. Now it has fallen into disuse. No one wants the race of man made into an assemblage of misfit freaks. But, once men accepted the variform idea enthusiastically."

"And then, when the growing races began to separate according to their forms, and arguments grew into wars between the various kinds of men . . . they gave each kind a planet or a group of planets according to their numbers . . ." Mion was watching Vanue's face.

"Yes," Vanue nodded, "and the Peirae, so much beloved of mankind, felt they were done an injustice when they were separated from the father race. And they were!"

Mutan wondered why.

"Because, dear Mutan, *the Peirae cannot produce men!* Only women, who each one brings forth her kind . . . which brings us to the real difficulty! The Peirae have always been famous for their love affairs with men. There's a whole class of ancient Atlantean poetic literature about them, most of it erotic."

"They were *still* human, in spite of the change, of course!" Mion was beginning to see a light.

"They are still women, who love men. No variform birth process, however far back in their ancestry, could remove their essential humanity entirely. They fall in love . . ."

Mion eyed Vanue questioningly, for he discerned something else behind her speech. And she explained. "I sent agents to learn what might have happened to those ships if the Barrier did *not* catch them. And they learned that the Peirans have suspected for some time that some people, perhaps pirates, have been *using* the Barrier. They cross through after a raid, with their captives."

Mion smiled, sorrowfully and cynically. "If it is but a dodge to hide their own guilt, I will go and tear the truth from them . . ." and Mion's eyes boded ill for some Peiran leader.

Vanue waved a wholly beautiful hand in negation. "I thought so too, until yesterday. One Elyse, called 'the Magnificent' by reason of her dream-making ability—they base everything on the art of dream-making—came to me here aboard the regular passenger liner. She is an en-

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voy from Peira."

"More lies, to conceal their activities?"

"No, Mion, she did much to convince me they are an honorable people. There have really been raiders operating near their seven worlds. And this same Elyse proved to me that she had herself crossed the Barrier! So it is not impassable."

Mutan Mion leaped to his feet, his eyes suddenly flashing with hope. "Where is this female wonder worker? Let me question her!"

Vanue motioned him to resume his seat, her eyes taking fire from his, her hands twitching a little with the desire to pilot a ship through the Barrier to the unknown realms beyond. "Patience, my Mion. Every pioneer, every rover, every famous astronaut has sought the answer to the puzzle of the Barrier. Now apparently it has been solved by one of the little Peirae! And of all the famous men they might have chosen to head their first expedition, they chose . . . whom do you think?"

Mion's eyes lit up. "Your Firko of Falnorn of course!" He *must* let me go with him!"

Vanue shook her head. "They did not even mention my Firko! The words of Elyse were: "We know of the great love of Mutan Mion and Arl, the Atlan variform of Nor. We know she disappeared in one of the ships of the unknown raiders. We did not mean to tell anyone of our discovery of a ray to penetrate the Barrier because some of the great nations would try to wrest our claim to new and valuable worlds from us, and keep them to themselves. But in pity for Mion we are offering him the honor of leading our fighting forces on this expedition. He may bring one ship and one crew, and is to be our war-leader subject only to our Elder Oracle."

Mion sank into subdued thought, his eyes on Vanue's under frowning brows as he sought some inimical intent in the proposition. "They trust us, Vanue? You and I alone know of this?"

Vanue nodded. "Until your warcraft *Darkome* clears her cradles, you are to tell no other your destination or your purpose, Lord Mion."

Mion sighed, his muscles losing their too taut strain after the sudden hope of finding Arl. "It seems then they are honorable and not responsible for the piracy. Otherwise they would never tell us such a secret; for they would be overwhelmed by adventurers if the news got out."

Vanue got up, her tall form such utter grace that Mion's heart did its usual flip-flop just at sight of her in movement. "You will find Elyse the Magnificent aboard the *Darkome* already. I have alerted your crew and canceled their shore leave under your name, to avoid loss of time. There is nothing to hold you back, my Mion. When next I see you, you will be either Lord of a world beyond the Barrier or dead."

Mion rose too, and suddenly snorted with laughter. "So, the great Mutan Mion goes into adventure, perhaps battle, in new, untamed worlds,

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at the head of an army of tiny, fairy women! Perhaps it is a good thing that it be kept a secret!"

Vanue's hands went out to Mion's shoulders, and her eyes fixing his in mute solicitude. "There is good matter for caution in this, Mion. These women are man-starved. For centuries they have sought some way out, to get away from the jurisdiction of the league which denies them contact with normal races, and thus, with men. They want to keep the passage a secret until they have colonized, and eventually removed all their numerous people to the new worlds beyond the Barrier. If the league gets in before they have arranged their life to suit themselves, all their desires will again be frustrated. If you do not find Arl, or even if you do, they will try every wile. They have remarkable ways of overcoming a man's self will, to hold them as their own. To keep their secret, perhaps forever! This whole proposition is ticklish and will demand diplomacy to keep your true freedom—or your position under me, if you think of it that way."

"It is the same," muttered Mion, his eyes on hers with the flame of utter admiration burning between them.

"Which is as I desire it, *freedom* and service under me should be equally desirable in practice. If you do not find Arl, you must return to me at least once before you permanently become a warrior under the Elder Oracle. For they will want you to remain with them, I know."

"So that you can search my mind and see if it is what I really desire?" asked Mion shrewdly.

She nodded, and turned away.

Mion called after her. "When the day comes I enlist under another, I think you had better examine my head." Her pleased laughter echoed back to him from the hall where she disappeared among the glowing, floating, drifting colored lights that were a part of her scheme of decoration.

THE small passenger aboard the *Darkome* was enthusiastic about the weapons, the size and power of the huge fighting ship.

"With this to head our expedition the ancient dreams of the Peirae will be realized . . ." she sopranoed to Mion, soon after they met. "So long we have waited an opportunity to break free from the strangling influence of the laws of the Elder courts. Now, at-last, from beyond the terrible Barrier comes light and a way!"

Mion, noticing strain on her face, bellowed to Commander Tyron, who had been with him on too many perilous adventures for ceremony to mean much to them: "Cut in the bow gravs, numbskull, do you want to crush us? This Peiran is not constructed like we elephants of Nor."

The small, entirely lovely personage gave a sigh of infinite relief as the acceleration pressure was almost neutralized by the artificial gravity generated in the bow engine rooms. "I had wondered if one had to endure such strains the whole way, and if I would survive."

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Mutan Mion looked at her curiously, trying hard to ignore her elfin beauty, and returned to the previous discussion. "What ancient dreams are those you speak of?"

She stared at him boldly. "We Peirans were never meant to live alone, and we do not plan to do so in the new worlds. That is one reason I asked for you, Mutan Mion, to captain our forces. Your fame will make your command acceptable to even the most famous warriors of other worlds, and gain for us the respect for our conquests that we might otherwise not have. And we intend to keep the new worlds free of Elder League domination, free of the unfair restriction that keeps us from the worlds of men simply because we cannot reproduce except our own kind—female."

Mion smiled a bit. "I can understand that. A world without love is not much of a world—but then love is a thing the Elders have long since forgotten; at least the kind of love that delights in the touch of a hand, the feel of lips on one's own, of the warmth and . . ."

Tyron snapped on another set of tubes, and again the pressure rose. The little Peiran staggered and suddenly collapsed against Mion. He held her, while the subtle scent from her delectable, unclad body stole into his senses. His heart throbbed suddenly loud in his ears. Her head in the hollow of his arm seemed the most fragile essense of beauty; the lovely lips relaxed against the gleaming teeth were entirely inviting. In sudden confusion Mion bellowed, "What are you trying to do, Tyr? Crush the little woman? Have you no caution?"

The big officer turned his sleek close-cropped head and winked one wide blue eye at Mutan, then cut in another grav-gen in the bow. In seconds the little woman from Peira opened her eyes and looked up into Mion's own gray eyes with gratitude and more than a little coquetry. "Oh, such nice strong arms . . ."

Mion set her on her feet hurriedly, so that she laughed with a delicious sound of mocking gaiety, and Mion found himself laughing too, for the first time in what seemed like years. He had not realized a laugh could feel so good.

Tyron stood up. "That's the first laugh I've heard out of you for too long! Now that you've recovered your wits, and can laugh again, perhaps you'd take a trick at the keyboard?"

Mion took his place, checking the meters and dials, measuring off on the telescopic view screens the distance between Antares and Nokar, two stars whose apparent distance would increase steadily as they approached their goal on this course.

THE huge *Darkome* settled slowly toward the capital city of this largest of the seven Peiran planets. This was a famous city in this star cluster, spoken of where stupendous and wholly beautiful architecture was a matter of course as the most beautiful of all cities, one without peer.

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It was most remarkable for its fragile, fairy structures, its lacy networks of bridges tying the whole sharp pinnacled thing together, tall spires lancing upward above the designed lacework with admirable grace.

Mion muttered to Tyron, for Elyse had gone to her cabin to make ready for departure, "It has occurred to me the variform technicons had a functional end in view when they created the first Peiri. In those days the prostitute was honored and her place in society secure. The pander and his kind were but a threat of evil to come. They may have foreseen our present lay predicament and designed the Peirae to circumvent the evil."

"You may be right," agreed Tyron. They must have been designed to fill a need, in order to stop the demoralizing influence on the race of a growing class of panders."

Mion nodded. "Then the purpose of the Peirae was forgotten, women turned against her on moral grounds, she became outcast. It could well be. At any rate we will have to watch our step—these Peirae are built for man's enslavement. With telaug they could make us forget our own names!"

Elyse came in again, her quick birdlike movement too rapid for them to keep track of her whereabouts. She turned her huge brown eyes up to Mion's.

"This expedition we are undertaking, Mion, is more perilous to our future than any worries you may have about your freedom. We will not in any way infringe the usual code of honor relative to the use of telaug equipment. Why should we? Please remember that we are actually a segment of your own race of mankind, not some other thing. A segment cut off forever from all pleasure in the opposite sex by official decree! We must escape that decree to live normally. Already we have been harmed in our inner nature. Degeneration is setting in. A vigorous, healthy culture must have an outlet, more foundation . . . you know what I mean."

Mion nodded and her quick, birdlike voice hurried on: "The stream of our life was perverted in its very creation. What it has become today we are planning to counteract. Do not judge us by what we are, but by what we plan to become in another set of conditions. For we do have some captives, as you have suspected. You must overlook these things and work to save us from our terrible position as outcasts of humanity."

"I will not condemn anyone before I know all the facts," whispered Mion, somewhat overcome by her nearness and her earnest, lovely eyes.

But there was no time for more discussion. Tiny disks, on which most of the nude and near-nude fairy-like forms of the Peirae rode kneeling, balancing and controlling its direction by mere swaying of their shapely hips, were swarming all about the *Darkome*. Tyron was sweating over the anti-grav levers as he strove to lower the mighty weight of the *Darkome* without any sudden movements

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that might mean death to some of the lovely things.

Mion was watching them with distended eyes, lips parted in unbelief. "It's impossible for mere women to be so infernally attractive!" he exclaimed.

Elyse shook her ringlets, laughing at his bemused expression. "They are not mere women, Lord Mion! They are Peirae, the beloved of Gods long forgotten. Once the beloved of all mankind, long ago! A race apart, designed for restoring broken hearts, raising the fallen, creating beauty from the dull fabric of every-day life. It was a great mistake when mankind allowed the Peirae to be set aside. They were an integrally designed part of the ancient pattern of life, of the *ro-man-tic* science.

Tyron at last grounded the great ship, and Mion twisted a telaug beam upon the group of floating saucers, each with its female rider, resplendent in sleek pink and white flesh and glittering jewels and little else but floating veils of gauzé of almost invisible material. The telaug gave forth an infinitely pleasing mingling of delighted thought. They listened with a growing awe to the beauty of the flow of Peiran anticipation of their emergence from the ship.

"No man born of woman," growled Tyron for Elyse's ears, "can listen to that stuff without being charmed into complete affection. It is their magic, their nature that shows in their thought so clearly one cannot but conclude they are wholly good. But no people *can* be so good! Which we can easily prove. . . ."

Elyse watched them as they slipped out the spools from the recorder and inserted them in a slowed-down augmentive device. On her face was a smile, as of a mother humoring the whims of a child. The playback proceeded at about a hundredth normal speed. Their eyes widened as they detected only pure music, a music of intention vastly intriguing, containing every delighted and honored reaction. There was not the slightest sign of the undercurrent of ulterior motives they were pretending to look for, half seriously, to goad Elyse into betraying herself into revealing whatever she might have held back from them.

"They're just genuinely glad to see you," murmured Elyse, her eyes laughing at them while her expression was of entire disapproval of their mistrust.

"This sort of thing is routine with us," Mion at last explained, a little shamefacedly.

"Are you finally going to trust us, after all that?" asked Elyse.

Mion nodded, and Tyron exclaimed: "Now that you have won our trust, let's go on with the reception they have planned."

Elyse shook her head, her ringlets flying as she mocked them with her eyes. What singularly inefficient policemen you would make! I am going to prove to you that we are prepared to honor you with our complete cooperation, holding back nothing. This is something lost in the past, in your records, that you should know and

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don't. Watch . . ." Her little pink-tipped fingers twisted the knob on the augmentive device rapidly, until the record was slowed to a thousandth its former speed.

Mion looked at Tyron as the record began to give forth understandable thought instead of the meaningless mumble that should have resulted. At a thousand reductions, the quick, birdlike tones had entirely disappeared. The sound like a little waterfall that had been audible at a hundred reductions also disappeared, leaving only a slow, strong organ-like sound of background. Above this powerful sound that was normal thought a thousand times slower, there appeared a new, quick mental flow, as bright with meaning as a jewel is bright with glitter. It was not meaning from many minds, but one among the many waiting outside.

"It is the greatest warcraft ever to visit this world! It is armored as no ship I ever saw before was armored. Its rayports are huge as the doors of Hell itself. The weapons behind those ports would blast the planet itself to dust if loosed upon us! Certain it is that the man they place in command of such a ship is no ordinary man."

Elyse snapped the record switch into silence, and smiled at them with pride in her success. "Those variform technicons who created us gave us a dual mind, for they meant us to explore other minds with our perceptions and to make them well. That is really why they gave us the power of self-reproduction, so that we might avoid the mental strains of sexual ties . . . but that was a mistake. They did not remove our sexual motivations, they only divorced our race from the means of assuaging our own desires . . . however, it was a mistake they did not foresee. Now, have I not proved to you that we trust you, by revealing our inmost secret?"

Mion said: "All is forgiven, Elyse, the Magnificent, if that is what they call you. We shall try to be wholly your friends, from here on. But I must allow none of my men to leave this ship until I decide whether it is safe for . . ."

Tyron snorted. "If you expect them to behave on the long voyage through the Barrier, you'd better let them have shore leave *now!* Are you become an old lady? There is no danger here for them? I would stake my life on it."

Elyse smiled, her face a little wan from the strain of the trip. "You are forgiven your suspicions, whatever they may be, Commander Mion. But let us have no more of them without reason. We could enslave you all if we so wished, and little would anyone know of it or ever learn. But we are honorable people, as Vanue knew when she consented to loan us this ship and you and your crew. If you did not believe that, why did you come?"

Mion passed his hand before his face wearily. "I have not been myself, since Arl did not return. You must forgive me if I seem churlish, for my heart is black with sorrow and my mind refuses sense and worries

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and quibbles at every straw. Tyron, set the usual shore guard, let the others have liberty!"

Mion moved off to don his dress uniform.

MION watched Tyron go off ahead, with a delicate rose-pink nude drifting ahead of him on her floating disk while her rays played stimulatingly over Tyron's stalwart masculinity. The grin on his face was a good grin, of sheer amusement at the magic of these creatures, so elfin and sure in their deft jests at his size and handsome appearance; so purely poetry of motion on their gliding, darting gayly colored disks. Tyron had no words to describe his delight in them, and needed none. He was going to enjoy this visit, and over the watching telaug Mion could hear his clumsy attempts to cover his inward prayers that the Peirae would not attempt some subtlety that would turn Mion away from the venture.

"Are you ready?" Elyse asked Mion. She looked as bright and fresh as a drop of dew.

Mion took a last look at the scene outside before switching off the telaug and vision screens. "I love the sound and sight of them. It is like discovering I have a million dear sisters before unknown to me . . ." Mion smiled at Elyse, not afraid to voice his true sentiments now that Tyron was not there to jibe at his soft heartedness.

Elyse narrowed an eye, raised one expressive shoulder in a somehow possessive gesture. "I pray they may remain but dear sisters, all of them except myself, Lord Mion," she murmured in a voice soft and gentle as leaves in a spring breeze.

"Why do I think of them as small? Look," said Mion, still lingering over the switch, "There is one joining Tyron's escort nearly as large as myself."

Elyse sniffed disparagingly. "They are all quite large enough, Lord Mion. You are still vastly uneducated in the refinements of love as practised among the Peirae."

Mion snapped off the switch, eyeing her, his imagination racing, knowing she was projecting into his mind all manner of suggestions of things erotic heretofore unknown to him—letting him think it was his own imagination's work. One big hand went out and grasped her soft little arm and a frown like thunder came and sat on his broad brow. "Whatever you mean, Elyse, and whatever you are doing to capture my love, remember I came on this expedition solely to find my one love, Arl of Atlan, my wedded wife. Until I *know* she is dead, you may help me ward off temptation and so keep my friendship. You will not keep it by awaking any amorous sentiments in my breast, for I will only forbid you my company. Now let's go."

Tears came and rolled down Elyse's soft cheeks, quick and numerous as a child's, and she struggled unavailingly to release her arm from his powerful fingers. They stood there, eye to eye, her's wet with tears

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of humiliation and anger and something else he could not fathom. Finally she nodded, her voice choked with anger or shame. "For far too many years, Lord Mion, I have not felt the hand of a man upon me, and now when I do it is put there in anger. Are you not a little ashamed to threaten me? I am not at all as you think me."

Mion released her. His voice was a growl, as fierce as a bear in sound. "Until I know you well, Elyse, I will reserve judgment as to your nature. Meanwhile remember to deal honorably with me after my own desires."

She shook herself, settling her floating veils again about her shoulders, and stretching one leg and then the other like a ballet dancer, her eyes suddenly forgetting they had been wet with tears and sparkling with humor again. "*After your own desires,*" she repeated after him, "I swear to deal honorably with you!" She laughed, a tinkle of complete amusement with him.

Mion was forced to laugh too, but he said: "Just remember, Elyse, I like you. And if I were minded to stray, it could well be toward you. But I love Arl, and cannot take to her a mind filled with love experiences. How would she feel if I rescued her from imprisonment and she came to my arms, looked into my mind . . . and found there she was almost forgotten?"

Mion waited, while all but ten of his crew left the ship and were swallowed up in the swarm of hovering saucers. Some managed to ride on the little things with their fair passengers. Others found the seat too precarious, and walked beside their welcomers toward the city. Then Mion came out, arrayed in the black uniform of the Nortan War-Navy, bearing on his breast in glittering gold the embroidered Lily above the couchant Lion that was the symbol of Nortan empire.

At his appearance, with Elyse upon his arm, the swarm of disks fluttered, as if excitement itself controlled their motions, rising and falling and swooping closer to look at him. Their thoughts wove a gay phantasmagoria of welcome about him.

A larger disk was waiting for his greater weight. He stepped upon it with Elyse, kneeling beside her. It moved off along the green-grassed paths between flowers and pools and tall, graceful birds standing in stately wonder at the commotion; between flowering trees and banked masses of blooms of all kinds proclaimed that in gardening at least the Peirans were second to none.

They came to the great central towers surrounding the original home of the Peirae on this planet. Old it was, but beautiful with the hand of time making it mellow, and the trees about it were gnarled and draped with flowering mosses dangling long, graceful streamers. The grasses were soft and thick as a bed. The stream that passed around the ancient place as a moat was afloat with lilies. The air was brilliant with darting birds, whose songs rang deliciously and con-

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stantly far and near.

Mion sighed, for this place was beyond beauty in its perfection, somewhat as he had dreamed his own place called Mandark would be when he had completed it in the future. He thought of Arl, and how she would have enjoyed this place and these charming Peirae to welcome her, and in his mind he could hear her laughing. But in his heart was only brooding sorrow at loss of her.

THE men from the *Darkome* passed through the walls of the Peiran stronghold not untouched by awe. The great age of the edifice, the charm of the artwork showing a love and reverence for beauty and for their own strange woman-race, artwork that had left undecorated no smallest area in all that ancient pile, yet had made nowhere any slightest error in artistic judgment, affected them with a complete respect for the minds and the culture behind them. The centuries of toil and striving toward perfection that had created this palace of the Peirae drove home unavoidably the superiority of these strange small womanish creatures over the crude raw barbarities of so many younger races.

A feast had been spread, and they were given barely time to bow the knee before the Elder Oracle—a beautiful Peiri whose appearance betrayed to the eye no hint of her age—when they were conducted to the banquet board by tiny, laughing maidens, whose youth and unimportance could only be guessed at by their size, for they frequently resembled one another too much for one to tell them apart except on long acquaintance. Mion knew these smaller women were younger members of the court, perhaps twenty years old, perhaps a hundred, but certainly not of the elder controlling groups, for he was experienced in the size range among immortals, (who never stopped growing), and could guess fairly close the age of any member of a race he knew well. But he did not know these Peiri well, and he guessed that their original size was much less than a normal human's. Those Peirae of a size close to his own he guessed were perhaps twice as old as he was.

They were left little time for guessing and speculation, for each man was seated between two of the beautiful Peirae, and soon found himself busy with badinage and being plied with Paradisal wines; while upon two raised platforms on opposite sides of the room were performers who went into amazing acrobatics, rapidly succeeded by dancers who moved among fantastic projections of a quality that aroused admiration, for no other race was so expert in the type of projection used in illusory creations.

It was something like trying to watch a three-ring circus; eat heavenly viands; drink potent wines; and carry on two conversations all at the same time. The result was a most pleasant confusion, a confusion in which one was aware only that every vista pleased and every sensation was

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ecstatic.

Beside his place at table—which was the place of honor at the right of the Oracle herself—Mion found Elyse. He also found he was delighted that she was seated beside him. But he was engaged in conversation by the Oracle . . . .

"You find our race beautiful, Lord Mion?"

Mion smiled a little grimly, his lips twisting above his lean jaws as if deploring his own weakness. "I find them far too beautiful, and for my own peace of mind I wish it was their custom to wear more clothing. But in your climate, and with their perfect bodies, I beg you will not consider my own desire to keep my heart faithful to my lost Arl of Atlan."

The Oracle laughed, her hand gesturing negligently toward the perfectly nude dancer who was weaving a mockery of fear and flight among the grotesque projections of artfully threatening monsters. "It is their only pleasure, really, Lord Mion. The dance is their outlet. Grooming their sleek bodies is a part of their dancing. As they dance, each one has an image of her heart's desire in her mind and she dances to that image—for it is her only lover. It is heartbreaking to one who knows what life should be for women as lovely as they. That is why you are here, Lord Mion."

"I don't quite understand," murmured Mion, though he suspected he knew well enough.

"To lead us to new worlds where we can have our heart's desire in the flesh. Through the Barrier, where your great warcraft will clear the way of peril for our colonists' ships to build a new way of life for us."

Mion leaned forward. "I want to talk to you about this Barrier, revered one. Are you certain passage can be made? It has always meant death even to approach it."

Her eyes were suddenly fiery with emotion, an eagerness that amounted to fanaticism. She leaned toward Mion, her full ripe bosom pressing his shoulder, while all about them the feast proceeded more and more boisterously, like a storm coming up on a sea of flowers. "It is a wall of false gravity, a vast flow of gravitons from no one knows what source, proceeding toward no one knows what fearful distant destination!"

Mion's mind was in a whirl, not from her words, but because of her Elder vitality. A perceptible vibration overwhelmed him. Her gown beneath the formal over-robe was sheerest sendaline, with artful openings revealing the soft white flesh. Must she get so close? He wiped his brow with one hard palm. "I know that ships caught by the Barrier flow are crushed like egg shells—like little dolls the people within them. Some have been found thus after being flung aside by the flow."

"Our own gravity fluctuates at times, as stray current from the Barrier finds its way toward our sun. We have made a constant study of it because we have always feared that in one of its unpredictable shifts it would overwhelm our worlds with

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weight. As a result we have learned many things not known by others."

Mion nodded, fighting to keep his eyes from her rich body, yet just as fearful of her blazing eyes, so full of mysterious, beckoning wisdom; a wisdom whose depths he dared not even guess at because of the desire to plumb them. He sipped his rich blue wine, and the exotic flavor of it burned softly inside him, surging along his veins swiftly. "I can believe you know more of the Barrier than others. But to pass through it! It is hard for me to accept the possibility, as I have studied the problem and found no least hint of a solution."

She still leaned against him, filling his cup again with wine. The little maid with the flagon looking at her reproachfully for taking away her one chance of approaching the guest of honor. She went on, her voice low and subtly sweet, while Elyse gave her a dagger glance over Mion's broad shoulders. "When matter approaches the Barrier, the gravitons swarm outward, as bees toward a flower. As they settle about the object, any life thereon is crushed into a density beyond our experience. The Barrier has been the end of our universe, the wall beyond which man has never passed. How many longships full of brave men have gone out to circumnavigate the Barrier, never to return! Its size is so vast no one has ever found its end in any direction. The task was abandoned . . . until chance showed one of our traders the way. I will call her to you . . ."

She straightened, so that Mion's shoulder missed the soft weight of her against him. He gulped his wine in a desperate refusal to think of her beauty. The Oracle gestured to one of the little serving maids, and when she came said to her: "Ask Saphele of Pharin to come to me; the Lord Mion would question her."

WHILE they waited Mion turned toward Elyse, who immediately hissed in his ear: "So you prefer her to Elyse! Watch yourself, or she'll be wearing you on her leash like a lapdog."

Mion grinned, wiping his brow with his handkerchief. "How does one avoid that, Elyse? I'll give you whatever you ask if you'll tell me the secret."

Elyse looked him soberly in the eye, noting his flushed cheeks and clenched teeth. "Just think of me! I will keep my hand in yours under the table. And I will ask my reward later, in private."

"I wonder if that's the right answer?" muttered Mion, turning back to the oracle, whom he estimated must have lived twice as long as himself, for she was nearly as large.

Standing beside her tall chair was a small Peiran, no higher than Mion's waist, very pretty, but set in a hardier mould than most. Her face was deeply bronzed by the suns of a dozen far worlds, and her sleek arms rippled with strength. She wore a warrior's leather harness, unusual for a Peiran, hung with weapons strange to Mion.

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Her blue eyes as they met his own were steady and confident, like the eyes of a man of courage, yet they had a woman's bright glance besides. Mion liked her at once. Here was a woman one could swear by, and very possibly with.

"Our revered Oracle tells me you would like a word about the passage, to set your mind at rest so you can enjoy this reception . . ."

Mion grinned. "Perhaps I want to talk of such things so I won't enjoy myself too much, Miss . . .

"My name is Saphele, and I am a rough untutored trader. Born out in space aboard a trading ship—in fact my egg hatched over the warm air vent from the engine room. I am not the same kind of article you find in these city-bred Peiran woman. I speak truth, and am apt to anger if people doubt me. Whatever I say you can believe I have the proof."

"I accept your honesty, Saphele. Now tell me how this passage is accomplished."

Saphele leaned upon the arm of the majestic Oracle's great carved chair, looking like an unconventional angel beside a Goddess, and Mion was glad to rest his eyes on her to avoid the rather overwhelming charms of the Oracle.

"There is a twin planet, a huge one about which whirls a smaller satellite. They traverse the Barrier regularly, their immense orbit centering on some distant and huge body beyond the Barrier. They are barren worlds, and they are terrifically heavy, because they have passed through the Barrier every three months—old Earth's months—for a countless time."

"Each passage their weight quadruples! . . ." murmured Mion, reading her mind.

"One is *taught* that, Lord Mion. One does not know it for a fact, only that *the surface* acquires such weight. Well, I was caught by the attraction of the greater planet of the twin. It swept out upon me so quickly I never saw it until my ship was falling. Inextricably caught by the terrible mass, I was certain I was dead. But I tried to stay alive. I pulled out all the throttle stops and swung for the smaller world. Its surface is smooth as a billiard ball, a black-gray ugliness. I set the ship down using every atom of repulsion—and still the ship was wrecked beyond repair, crushed by the terrible weight of the dense little ball of material; material deposited by the Barrier itself."

Mion watched her, hoping she was the adventuress she appeared, liking the sound of her voice, hoping she would guide him through the unpassable Barrier.

"These worlds pop out through the Barrier only in a small arc of the orbit, an arc that takes but a few days to complete, and then they pass within again. I reasoned my only hope was to bore a cavern into that dense stuff and pray that perhaps the Barrier force does not penetrate so deeply as one is taught it does. I took the anti-grav units from my ship and strapped them on my back. I couldn't even walk without every bit

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of lift they gave me. I dismounted the dis-ray from the bow, and spliced every bit of cable on the wrecked ship into one, connecting the ship to the dis-ray. Then I started to bore into the smooth surface, all my engines going to give the ray its full penetration."

Mion nodded. The thing was possible. It could be done that way—but in three days to bore deep enough . . . "Did you really expect to escape the crushing weight by going underground?" he asked.

Saphele shook her small head, the gold-yellow curls flying like dandelions in the wind. "No, Lord Mion, I did not expect to live. I was just making the only effort I could make to stay alive. But the ray did not pierce the surface density well. The hours crept by and I was only a few feet down. Clouds of smoke from the dis-ray were choking me in my helmet—you know how they penetrate anything—and I came up, to the surface to let the tunnel clear out. Then I saw it—another ship!"

"You saw someone else on the little planet?"

Saphele's eyes were bright as diamonds on his own. "Aye, Admiral, I saw a strangely-built craft making landfall. They swept around and disappeared on the other side of that little world, and they did not reappear. I sat down in thought, and decided they must have some way of getting into the core. We have long suspected that raids were made from beyond the Barrier, but no one ever listened to us or tried to set a trap for the raiders. But now here they were."

"You went to them?" asked Mion.

"I had to detach a small atomic generator to drive my anti-grav units so I could leave the ship. Then I made my way across that utterly smooth surface, thinking each step would be my last for the weight.

She paused, her eyes never leaving Mion's face.

Mion murmured: "Please go on!"

"The weight was increasing; we were already entering the Barrier. I was nearly done when I found it—nearly fell into it. It was a shaft, going straight in—I didn't know how far. But I knew that ship had gone in, and that I would be dead in short minutes unless I followed. I expected only to die when I stepped off the edge of that shaft. With the anti-gravs I carried only making my weight bearable, I fell interminably. The shaft goes all the way in to the core."

"At the core there was the ship . . . ?"

"There were a dozen ships at the core. There was a lateral boring, quite big, room for a small fleet. Weightless at the center of gravity, I drifted to a landing in the darkness, hid myself beneath one of the ships. As the hours dragged by, I found that only one of those ships bore passengers. The others were antique hulks, abandoned in some forgotten past. After I was sure of this, I boarded one of them, remained hidden for weeks. I had food concentrates in a small pack. When the raider left, I knew we were through the Barrier."

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MION breathed a long sigh, and found he was still gripping Elyse's warm palm under the table. "I believe you, Saphele. I'll go over the whole thing with you later on, when there's not so much distraction."

Elyse whispered close to his ear, as if to impart a secret: "I went with Saphele on her second trip. Beyond the Barrier! The dream of our universe, to cross the Barrier! Lord Mion, there are just as many stars, just as infinite a universe on the other side. And all, all of those myriad worlds, unknown to our civilization!"

"*The unknown,*" murmured Mion, in a deep, growling tone that shivered down along the table like distant thunder, and woke from every eye a start, a thrill of awareness of adventure to come. "*The unknown* . . . what can lure a man like things unknown, to be seen and touched and tasted, to be fought or befriended or wondered at—? Elyse, what other lure can compare with the vast unknown?"

Elyse, leaning into his eye-glance like a hiker breasting a strong wind, and smiled. "Lord Mion, there are many unknowns, and but few knowns. Yet the known can be far sweeter than any distant, untasted sweet."

Mion hardly heard her. "Tell me, Elyse, did you land on any world beyond the Barrier?"

"In the wildest jungle, yes. We were afraid to be seen, for the raiders Saphele had seen possessed powerful ships and weapons unknown to us. So we made but one landing, to bring back something from beyond the Barrier to prove we had been there."

"Afterward, you must show me these things you brought back, Elyse. Now, we had better pay some attention to the feast. It's hardly polite to engage with other things the whole time. But to tell the truth, my heart's not in merry-making. I would blast off tonight with Saphele if I had my way."

Overhearing, the Oracle again leaned against Mion, turning her burning eyes up to his with very evident coquetry. "Of course you are too full of our project to relax in this frivolousness. Let us retire to some more private place and go over our plans, and so set our minds at rest. Saphele!"

Mion saw no opportunity of refusing the invitation as Saphele immediately returned from among a cluster of admiring maidens. Mion kept a firm grip upon Elyse's hand, though she had not been expressly invited by the Oracle. No one at the long table paid them much attention and the little speech of leave-taking the Oracle made went almost unheeded. Mion noticed there were already several vacant places at the table, and wondered just how many of his men had retired "to some more private place."

Saphele took his other hand, so that he followed the tall graceful voluptuousness of the Oracle like a father with two lovely waist-high girl children following the mother.

The elder Peiran led them to an

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office-room, underneath the banquet hall. This, Mion saw, was her personal lair The meticulous appointments, the wealth of strange mechanisms, the lavish display of rich fabrics and strange exotic jewels, told him she was one who appreciated the good things life could provide more than most, or—his mind amended—was provided with extremely intelligent servitors.

A female voice whispered in his mind: *You do our beloved Averna an injustice! She is worthy of every respect—*

Mion had so far failed to notice the usual telaug ray surveilance, was irritated now that it showed up. He murmured mentally: *I was congratulating myself on the well-mannered ray personnel, who managed to keep so silent one forgot one could never be alone. Some day I hope to land upon a world where there will be not one single ray, and I can really be alone and listen to myself think, knowing it is really my own mind.*

The ray answered: *That will be soon, for the worlds beyond the Barrier do not know ray, except the raiders. And you will make short work of them.*

We hope! murmured Mion, seating himself at a good safe distance from the Oracle who was busy unrolling a newly constructed star chart —still unfinished—on the wall. She picked up a pointer and rapped with it like a school teacher bringing a class to order. Saphele sat cross-legged on the floor, and Elyse drew a stool to Mion's side, sat down with his hand in hers again. After a moment, Saphele leaned lightly against Mion's leg, and absently rubbed her face against his knee, like a cat.

"What lies beyond the Barrier," the Oracle Averna began, "has been the subject of wild speculation for untold centuries. That terrific universal tide of energy has never been fully understood by the ancients of Enn. It has bounded the League like the end of the universe. We know it is an everlasting flow of condensing ex-disintegrant matter, but where it comes from, where it goes, why it exists in that particular fashion we have never fathomed."

Mion stood up, saying: "Correction. The Barrier is *not* condensing exd! It does not begin to condense until matter approaches it. It is a super-saturated solution of ether, bearing the components of matter in such a way that they do not precipitate to form matter until matter enters the Barrier."

Averna flushed, then smiled. "Correction noted, Lord Mion. You are right of course, and I knew that, but was trying to bypass facts you knew already to get to those you don't. The Barrier is deadly chiefly because of its unpredictability. It fluctuates thousands of miles in seconds, and hundreds of thousands of miles in minutes—or sometimes hours. No man can say where it will be precisely from one minute to the next. So it is difficult to approach the limits of the Barrier closely without coming too close and being crushed. It has been this unpredictable movement

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that has kept the Barrier inviolate. Now we know how to cross it—and I cannot help but wonder why it was never done in our own time before?"

Mion murmured: "Saphele would not have found the boring if she had not glimpsed the raiders. It was sheer chance saved her life."

Saphele glanced at him, her eyes unreadable.

Averna nodded. "Still, such a tunnel to the core could have been bored at any time by our adventurous mariners. They know where to get the tools for building caverns."

"A landing on either of those twin worlds that cross the Barrier has always resulted in death. The passage was bored, I suspect, an age ago, when that planet was elsewhere in space. You could not drill such a hole in that planet today. Its crust is far too dense to melt before the dis-rays."

"Be that as it may, I have something else to show you. Saphele, bring Lord Mion the monkey."

SAPHELE departed obediently, to return in minutes bearing a small pink monkey. She put it on Mion's lap, where it sat gravely sedate, its large greenish eyes riveted on Mion's. The ray-watch touched it with augmentive energy, and Mion read the thought in its mind. Pictures of its home, a great ancient tree above a ruined temple. Pictures of . . . *things* moving in and out of the temple in the dim forest light. *Things* the monkey feared, and did not want to think about, but was being made to do so by the distant ray-watch. The *things* were doing frightening acts with metal objects, and the noises and chanting were—to the monkey—madness.

"A weird culture," commented Mion, intent upon the monkeys augmented thought.

Saphele picked up the monkey, caressing it, perching it on her shoulder as it calmed. "A culture which I suspect types the civilizations we will meet beyond the Barrier." She smiled, and the monkey chattered shrilly, clasping her about the ears. "There is little else of importance in its thought, but those scenes of the worship in front of that ancient temple tell much. Another item I brought back was a crystal which possesses properties unknown to our technicons. Also, perhaps most important of all, a half-ton of black soil so fertile that a seed dropped into it sprouts and grows to maturity in hours—an unbelievable rate of growth! There is so much to learn about life from that soil . . ."

"I want to see that ship you came back in, Saphele." Mion tickled the monkey's stomach, and it chattered and scrambled on top of her head.

"You will," she assured him, and took the monkey out of the room again.

Averna then pointed her wand at the map. "This is a chart Saphele drew up of the stars as they look from beyond the Barrier. Light passes through the Barrier—but distorted, twisted. No observation is trusted of the heavens beyond the

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flow. This shows you how wrong the astronomers are as to what suns and planets lie beyond. The Barrier not only distorts, it minimizes size, and magnifies distances. You will note that quite close to us, but upon the other side of the Barrier, is a star cluster of seven suns. Saphele has drawn in the thirty or more satellites of these suns, it makes a respectable little universe, and we plan to make it our first port of call. Yet, the official star charts of the heavens beyond the Barrier show this cluster to be a thousand light-years distant."

Mion nodded. "I am accustomed to scientific error; one expects it in space travel. No telescope ever told the eye the truth about anything."

Averna went on, pointing out the star clusters and the distant single suns, outlining possible future explorations. Saphele did not return, and presently Averna sat down and looked at Elyse, still holding Mion's hand as he had asked her to do. "Could you allow me a few moments alone with Lord Mion, Elyse dear?" she asked, her words honey-sweet with that womanish sarcasm no man ever quite manages. "There are some things I want to discuss with him it were better not even your ears heard."

Elyse arose, all grace and sweet obedience. "As you wish, dearest Elder. But there is one object I must request you not to touch . . ."

Averna raised her eyebrows, mystified. "What object is that, Elyse?"

Lord Mion's heart!" Elyse stood, legs spread, a defiant urchin facing an overstrict teacher. "I like and trust you perhaps more than you know. And you respect me or you would not have sent me to the Lady Vanue with our secrets. But promise me, on your word of honor, no tricks! It is not necessary to bind him with any such ties."

The Oracle's proud face flushed deeply, and her eyes flashed lightnings on Elyse, who did not quiver an eyelash, but stood waiting. After a moment the Oracle relaxed, and her hand made a gesture of compliance. "I promise, Elyse. Perhaps you are more aware of the path of honor than I. Certainly he is a temptation to us, beggars of love that we are. You may sleep with your mind at peace, dear friend."

Elyse went out, and Mion sighed thankfully. He had met Elders before, female Elders, but never one who was not supplied with a mate or mates. And no man can withstand the vital attraction of the strong life in an Elder god! Certainly if Averna's voluptuous beauty were earnestly to set about overcoming his resistance, he would be lost. His memory of Arl would be swallowed up in such strong, new impressions of beauty and love that they would be as the memory of a ghost.

AVERNA chucked throatily, eyeing Mion with a cat-and-mouse glance of pure deviltry, and Mion shifted uncomfortably in his chair, turning his eyes away with a visible effort of will.

"It is much to ask, but I meant my

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promise to her, Lord Mion. What I want to discuss is something I do not want anyone else to know as yet—our future plans after the crossing is successful."

Mion nodded, not saying anything.

She went on: "Once we have transported all our people to those worlds, I want to destroy the twin planets. I do not want the League to follow us, now or later. If you will consider, you will understand why. We have had entirely enough of their law of segregation. We are women, and were never meant to live without men, even if it is true that we bring forth our own young without male help.

"I can understand that. . . . I still don't know how to address you properly, Oracle."

"Call me Vern, as my closest friends do, except in a formal gathering of some official kind, where everyone calls me something like: "Illustrious One; Elder of Elders; etc. Such things are meaningless when you reach my age, Mion. Sometimes I wish I had died centuries ago—it has all been so boring. Today, and the days since Saphele returned, are the first excitement I have had for centuries, Mion. You cannot realize how tiresome living alone can become."

Mion only watched the map on the wall, not trusting himself to look at her, for however bored she might have been by her centuries of life, they had not affected her beauty but to increase it year by year.

"What I want you to think about, Lord Mion, is whether you will remain on our side of the Barrier when you destroy the means of passage, or upon this side. You will have to make up your mind before the time comes."

"I will keep it in mind, Vern. But it may be a hard decision . . . and if I find Arl, doubly difficult. She is attached to our home, you know."

"If you do remain with us, Lord Mion, there will be another request to make of you. As you know, we are a race of egg-layers. We self-fertilize these eggs. They can be caused to be infertile by an act of will by the mother. Most of our eggs are thus worthless, by our own determination, for we lay twelve eggs a year. Our world would be overpopulated in one generation, were it otherwise. Our scientists have long sought a way to bring our race back to the normal human methods of reproduction, unsuccessfully. However, we have found a method that will work out as well. We can now fertilize our eggs *after* they are laid, thus producing equal proportions of male and female and giving us once again a race with two equal sexes."

Mion clapped his hands together. "Fine! Then your future is assured. You won't have to worry about the League and its restrictions."

Averna shook her head. "You forget those of us already alive, Lord Mion. And, for that generation of dual-sexed Peirae we expect to breed beyond the barrier—*we need fathers!* We cannot produce male offspring without a father. Once we are established in the new worlds, we will make such a request of you—to father

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millions of young for us. You will either be honored, or you will refuse. In either case, bear it in mind until the time comes."

Mion was staggered. "Millions . . . !" Then he realized she meant insemination of the eggs, an artificial process. "But even so!"

"We would not want a lesser man to father a race, Lord Mion. But if we *must* use a lesser man, we will do so."

Mion sighed. "How can I decide anything with my own will in abeyance . . . from your beauty's effect?"

"How can we show what we have for you with your will refusing all our gifts for fear of— What do you fear?"

Mion examined his fears, and laughed. "I do not seem to fear anything, but I know I am not myself."

"When you know all about our methods, and what it is we plan to make of our strength, you will understand. We plan such a design for life as was never conceived before. The variform scientists made us what we are long ago, Lord Mion. We plan to undo their work and make of ourselves a new race! All we want of you is . . ."

Mion nodded. "I know, and I object."

Suppose I told you the Lady Vanue had sent you to us for that very reason!"

"She would have said so."

AVERNA rose to her feet, something in her movements compelling Mion's attention. She came toward him slowly, with languorous grace and ripe, full beauty, her eyes obscured as if in concealment of some secret thought. As he rose to meet her, her eyes fixed on his and held him unavoidably.

"I promised Elyse, and I mean to keep my promise. But there is one experience you must have—so that you will know what our real purpose was; what the ancient technicons meant to achieve in us when they used their variform culture to create us. You must accept some knowledge of us, Lord Mion, before you presume to make any decisions, and I will give you that knowledge now. I will show you what my proposition would really mean to you."

Mion held both hands to his eyes. "I came here to war against savage peoples, to win back my kidnaped Arl! I will have nothing else!"

"Not even a dream?" she asked.

He looked at her. "A dream?"

She laughed. "Yes, a dream-record of the past—of the far past when we were not outcasts, but existed in the League as a vital part of its life, as was originally intended. A *history*, Mion. A mental experience from a very ancient thought-record."

She went to the wall, and from a secret cabinet took a metal spool. Inserting it in a machine to one side, she guided Mion to a chair where he was seated with a helmet over his head. Then she turned on the machine, and the world of today slipped away from him, and it was though he dreamed—dreamed so realistically that he actually took part in

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the events of a day long dead.

Time can be telescoped in a dream. Thus, Mion passed through twice ten thousand years of Peiran life, missing not a heartbeat of all those endless lifetimes. His brain reactions, speeded up tremendously by the record, comprehended the whole, with no condensation of events.

So, he knew the Peirans from their beginnings quite as well as they knew themselves. Also, he learned to love them thoroughly; as the dream-makers had cunningly designed. Mion had never experienced such infinitely wonderful delight, such deep, soul-shaking ecstasy.

And he knew how wonderfully the Peirans had been made. . . .

THE ruling power on Peira was not a complex thing, on paper. Actually, the oldest of them was called the Oracle, and the most able of them was her Acting Oracle. Almost everyone did as they pleased. Their government was a loose matriarchy, with few troubles among their people.

Which was how the machine-builders came to hold power. No one objected overmuch. Deep beneath their numerous cities, the machine-builders had their factories. And somewhere within each great factory was a secret place, set aside for the Elder scientists.

The manufacture of dream-making devices was almost the Peiran's only source of income from outside their own economy. And their dream-mech were in demand wherever mankind was advanced enough to know the excellence of the Peiran machines by comparison with others. In a way, they had a monopoly on the market throughout the civilized universe. But their trademark was much copied, and they had little defense against such counterfeit manufactures.

Within the factories, as the centuries passed, the immortal Peiran scientists pondered and worked . . . and dreamed. And their dreams were augmented and made more vivid and delightful by their dream-mechs, so that they grew to wish for a life more like the impossible delights conjured into a false reality by the inbuilt relays of their dream-mech. For when one wishes for a peach, the dream-mech instantly creates a dream of an orchard loaded with peaches. And when one wishes for a man, as most of the Peirans found themselves constantly doing, the dream-mech created for them endless armies of men, all anxious to fall into their arms—forever. But there is something about a dream that leaves a strong wish for the real thing . . . however less desirable in some ways real things are in comparison to the perfections of dreams.

Through the centuries of their numerical growth this wish had grown among the fair egg-layers until it had become the ruling motive of their characters. Without making any public fuss about it, the scientists in their secret and forbidden retreats within their factories had set about satisfying this dominant wish of their

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near-identical sisters.

At first they had constructed tridim projectors which gave them waking dreams, as real as science could make them (which was even a little more so than reality). But no matter how carefully the records were designed, how well keyed to the probable thoughts of the mind using the apparatus, there was something missing, something the heart cried for.

They at length discerned that what was needed was an actual living masculine mind reaction, the true interplay of the two kinds of living magnetism which make up male-female relationship, without which no dream could be quite genuine, no vision quite real.

Then they created synthetic masculine minds, batteries of memory cells, each keyed to respond to the identical opposite in the mind of the female. Which produced in the tridim waking dream-dramas a synthetic mentality indistinguishable from the real thing . . . and still the hearts of Peiran multitudes went unsatisfied; their lives unfulfilled, their faces sad with some inner knowledge of frustration.

In desperation they then decided to kidnap and train men from nearby nations, who would use their minds to produce for the poor heart-hungry women the real thing in dreams, genuine response to their heart's desires, and give them dreams actually directed by a masculine mind.

But there were so many of the lovely egg-layers that the existence of these genuine masculine dream-makers was kept secret among the Elder Peirans, their use restricted to those among themselves who needed inspiration and a revived interest in life.

These tactics, forbidden by the League, brought a new knowledge, the realization of the true basis of happiness, and there occurred a crystallization of a plot to change the pattern of their life, to change the form of their race, to convert it to a more normal bisexual existence. And here, too, they broke the law of the League, for the art of the variform culture was also forbidden in this new age.

But, to bring about the change, which once consummated, would become stabilized and permanent, they had to have men, and they had to adapt their own bodies to fertilization of their eggs by the male. So it was that women like Saphele, traders and space navigators, often made an unprofitable trip pay off by bringing a few unsuspecting males to the forbidden planets. Now, with these men, the science had been perfected. And Mutan Mion had been selected as the perfect prototype to father the new race to be.

But Mutan still clung to his hope to find Arl, and while one part of him fought to succumb to the will of the Peirae, the other part of him yearned for his lost love. In him was a battle that tore his soul—except when he strove mightily at the work of getting preparations made for the voyage through the Barrier.

The Peirae took inspiration from

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his rugged attempts to get the ball rolling, and the fleet for the passage of the Barrier began to be loaded and readied. On every side the lovely women of the Peirae were busy, abandoning their loved homes and soft ways of living, even their dream-machines, making ready for the passage of the Barrier.

The first part of the expedition was to consist solely of fighting forces, led by Mion in the *Darkome.*

Following the *Darkome* were a dozen varied ships, traders and adventurers known to the Peirans, who had sworn allegiance to Oracle Averna. They were hard-bitten men, used to poking into all the little-known corners of the universe in search of treasure and trade; hardened to fighting and bloodletting. Yet they were good, gentle humans, who had passed the Peiran's strictest tests for destructive intent with flying colors. There was no taint of evil in them. These were the craft Mion depended upon to strengthen his arm if a real need for warfare arose. The rest of the force were Peiran craft, manned only by Peiran females, without a man aboard.

There was the ancient craft used by Saphele to return from the Barrier, built by some forgotten race of the far past, preserved through time by the dry cavern at the core of the planet. This was in good condition, and Saphele insisted on using it because she had found in it many engineering features unknown today, as well as mysterious mechanisms which she meant to study and use. There were also powerful weapons of several kinds, her chief reason for liking it and keeping it. She had manned this craft with her own friends, all space traveling women, used to long trading voyages.

THE Peirans had a fleet of trading vessels, sturdy craft designed for cargoes of machinery, but not fast and bearing for weapons only light dissociator rays. These had all been reconditioned, and re-weaponed under Nortan supervision, until they were fighting craft of respectable powers, but still not speedy in comparison with the warships of other nations. But they did not expect to have to battle nations of the known areas of space. The raiders whom they expected to meet were an unknown quantity—Saphele had had little opportunity to examine their craft.

They took off one morning, one hundred strong. The remaining reconditioned ships were left to convoy the passenger ships, still abuilding, when the first expedition had reported all clear. It was some four days and nights journey at the best speed of the cargo ships to the outer limits of the Barrier, there to wait the appearance of the twin planet from behind the Barrier flow.

The *Darkome* was a powerful fighting ship, able to handle anything its size in the known areas of space, but Mion breathed a prayer, watching the little Peiran converted freighters form a ragged line behind the *Darkome.* A prayer that these

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raiders whom they must inevitably run into were not more than the *Darkome* could handle alone, for he had little faith in the fighting ability of these small though clever allies of his.

They came out of overdrive some two-hundred thousand miles short of the Barrier, and swung parallel to the plotted orbit of the twins. They were nearly two days early, for no reason but to have plenty of time, and Mion decided to spend it in battle maneuvers, for he had no least idea how these allies would act in battle. He formed them into two teams, made them go through all the stages of battle, scoring "hits" on each other with cameras. Hour after hour he drilled them, exhorting, explaining, and when he was weary, he turned it over to Tyron, who went on with the battle.

The next day, he gave Tyron one team and took the other, and they dived and rayed each other out of existence a dozen times over. And when the time came for the twins to appear out of the gray distorting haze of the awful Barrier flow, Tyron felt they would at least obey orders and have some chance of scoring on an alert enemy.

The two planets, one large and the other much smaller, boomed swiftly down upon them out of the hazy outer limits of the Barrier flow. Suddenly they were clear and bright beside them as they plunged through the last faint wraiths of the force.

The *Darkome* swung into an orbit around the smaller, and as Mion had ordered, the other ships swung into a long line following closely, but not so closely the terrific gravity of the twins could seize them unexpectedly. Tyron, at the *Darkome's* controls, spotted the minute dark shadow of the opening into the core. The *Darkome* sank slowly to the surface of the weighty smaller planet, her generators thundering in protest as they encountered the awful pull of the dense mass the Barrier had made of the crust of the small planet.

It was ticklish piloting to get the vast girth of the *Darkome* into that small-appearing hole. The fit was almost too close, but swearing in three languages Tyron scraped and rasped through the opening and the descent began. The pull was terrific, more than they had expected by far. Down and down sank the *Darkome*. Mion, watching the walls ahead, suddenly bellowed "Stop her, Tyron!" but before the words had left his mouth the grinding roar of tortured plates and the sudden cessation of all movement told them the worst. The *Darkome* had hit a narrower part of the bore and was stuck fast. And there were but some four to six hours left them to free her—or die with her. The interval might be even less, if the Barrier happened to be shifting.

Tyron cursed louder and suddenly thrust on the bow jets, trying to lift her back with the drives and jets both on, as well as the anti-gravs. But she only quivered, seeming to wedge tighter.

They sat, frozen-faced with realization of the fix they were in.

"This can mean the death of us!"

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growled Mion, swinging the beam of the bow lights right and left to pick out the peculiarities of the rock structure that had caused the trouble. Then he bellowed into the intercom to the crew. "All into space gear, outside and clear her! She's jammed—have to cut the rock away. Look alive, men, our lives hang on this!"

Tyron, leaning there in sick desperation over the useless controls, suddenly pointed a finger into the screen that gave a view of the bore ahead like looking down a rifle barrel. "Look, Mion, the lights of the raiders' ship at the bottom! Better blast her before she lets drive at us! The crew can't go out into her ray blasts!" Mion, bending over the viewplates, swore.

"By the hairy legs of Pan, they've got us like a fish in a wicker trap! I've got but one ray snout that'll bear on her!"

(To be continued)

EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 5)

and fair that she have an equal position, as she deserves. I want to say right here and now, that she's a science fiction editor right up there with the best and she's a lot prettier!

Sometimes I wonder what we mean by beauty? Would we, going to other worlds, finding strange beings, consider them beautiful? Or would we find the lizard-women of Venus or Pluto to be horrid? To my way of thinking, not after we got to *know* them. You know, beauty is in knowing people. I know quite a few Earthmen who aren't any prize-winners, but to me they seem pretty terrific. There's something *inside* (and that would go for life anywhere in the universe) that *makes* beauty. Believe me, it isn't the skin, the color, the shape. It's the *person*. Wonder why science fiction writers haven't stressed that more often in their stories? That was the secret behind the extreme popularity of "Dear Devil" by *dear* Eric Frank Russell. When I call him dear, it means just that—we dearly love that guy's yarns! And we've got a terrific one of his on tap. You CAN'T miss it. So, just so you *don't,* it's in the January issue (No. 25). It's called "Somewhere A Voice."

One of the features you're reading now is a direct response to your suggestions—for really good fact articles. L. Sprague de Camp's LOST CONTINENTS (see ad in this issue) is from his book, and it's plenty authentic. Besides, we've found it absorbingly interesting ourselves.

A thought has struck us, suggested by a letter from a reader who criticises us for letting religion into the letter section as a subject for discus-

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sion. He stated that it wasn't a subject for discussion, and his basis was there was no room for discussion, as he knew his religion was the true one. He had faith. Well, in this country we base our whole constitution on such things—the right of the individual to believe as he wants, talk as he wants to, and listen as he wants to. Maybe he's got something, but it raises a paradox—if we're free to talk about anything we wish, and put it in the magazine, it would seem to presume on his right not to listen. Actually it doesn't, because he doesn't have to read it. Maybe we should label each letter with such a subject in it, so it can be avoided? Anyway, we want to be fair. But the thought that struck us wasn't about "to do or not to do," but about other worlds—other planets. When we reach them . . . Will they have a religion? Seems likely, if they are human, have the same general makeup, the same mental and spiritual capacities. Okay, if they do, then we must realize one thing before we open our big traps—*they* have the *true* religion. How can it be otherwise? Let's write it into our interplanetary constitution (and our "manual of polite behavior on other worlds") that wherever in space beings exist who place emphasis on spiritual values, on religions, they are the possessors of the true, the correct, the right thinking on the subject. Everywhere the Creator appears—and He must appear everywhere—he is the *true* Creator, no matter in what form. Perhaps it would be well for all of us to reverse that thinking and apply it to our own situation. If we Americans were unaware of anything beyond our boundaries, we would say there was only one president. It's simply a matter of scope—and we science fiction readers, looking out at other worlds, have widened our "horizons" to the point where our God has grown to unimaginable proportions. When we go where He is (we're sure He'll beat us to the other planets), we'll have to leave our narrower concepts of Him behind. Unless we want the warlike might of the Venusians, the Martians, the Alpha Centaurians to prove to us how wrong we are in very painful ways. No matter how true our faith is here, wherever we go, out there, it will be wrong! It's something to think about. If we saw the truth of that, we'd have no more Koreas, and we'd be ready for the other worlds. As it is, a galaxy-full of trouble is waiting for us at the end of our road to the stars. One thing is certain, God isn't depending on us to bring the *true* religion to other planets. Especially those older than our own. He's quite capable of getting around Himself. And if the guy who insisted to me his religion is the true one is right, then it's a lead-pipe cinch that they talk English on *every* other planet (and Latin, and Greek and all the other Earth languages) because one thing is sure, God knows his own Name!

Funny how many different ways we have of spelling it here on Earth! Which ought to suggest something to our critic . . . *Rap*

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FISH STORY

Illustration by W. E. Terry

By
J. P.
Caravan

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ONCE upon a time there was an old and famous university which stood on the edge of a high cliff, and at the base of this cliff the sea thumped and growled against the shiny gray rocks as if it wanted to tear away the edge of the land and tumble the university, students and all, splash! into a wet and nasty death.

In the laboratory of the bio-chemistry department, however, you could hardly hear the muttering mumble of the waves, for test tubes were bubbling and boiling over on the lab tables and bunsen burners were hissing like happy snakes—or like little fire-breathing dragons—and there was the constant thump of graduate students' experiments going wrong and blowing up and there was the low twittering sound of scholars whispering answers to one another and cheating on examinations. It was all very cozy.

Suddenly all the noise in the lab stopped. The test tubes stopped bubbling and the bunsen burners stopped burning and the graduate students stopped blowing themselves up and the undergraduates even stopped cheating on examinations, for from the office of a certain professor, a certain old and evil professor, came a delighted screeching laugh. Now, if you had heard this laugh you would know that something very horrible was about to occur, because when the professor was happy it was a bad sign.

He was a very old and evil man, and what is worse, he liked being a very old and evil man, and he worked as hard at it as he could.

Now he came bounding out of his office, laughing and screeching and foaming just a bit at the mouth. He dashed into the laboratory and leaped upon one of the tables and kicked three freshmen and a sophomore. When the students saw him rush into the room they fled into the furthest corner and clung to one another; and there was one small fight when four young chemists tried to cling to one pretty coed. Everybody was frightened: fear rushed around the laboratory like a small furry beast with shining eyes and nasty little fangs. The professor shook with his evil laughter and pointed a long finger at the students and made it wriggle flip-flop! in a double-jointed way—very horrible it looked—and said: "Guess what I've done! Guess what I'm going to do! My life's work is complete!"

Everybody knew this was pretty bad, for his life's work was in doing evil; and if he decided he'd completed it, then something more than just plain garden-variety evil was about to happen.

"Are you going to blow up the school?" asked one student.

"Are you going to turn somebody into an ape?" asked another.

"Are you going to make us study Economics?"

"Are you going to de-emphasize football?"

"Are you going to sing?"

The professor chuckled, for nobody had guessed what he was go-

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ing to do. His chuckle was a grisly noise, something like the sound an axe makes chopping off a head. "Yeek, yeek," he chuckled, "yeek, yeek," and he rubbed his hands together happily. "Can you guess, John?" he asked, pointing at one of the students and sneering.

Now John was the student of all the students who was most hated by the professor, for while the professor was busy doing evil John would be busy doing good, and now and then he would upset one of the professor's favorite plans; and what made it worse was that the professor would do his evil on purpose and John would usually do his good by accident. There was also the fact that John had married the old and evil professor's daughter. John was a bit absent minded, and he never really realized tha the professor hated him, but he knew that something was wrong.

"Can I guess what?" he asked.

The professor screamed with rage. "Can you guess what I'm going to do?"

John scratched his head. "I don't know. Are you going to come to our house for dinner? We're having platypus eggs."

"Dinner!" the professor cried. "John, John, you'll lose your appetite when you see what I'm about to do."

And he went "yeek, yeek," again.

"What's that, father-in-law?" John asked.

The professor turned bright purple with a red patch on the back of his neck when he heard this. "Don't call me father-in-law," he cried. "Don't call me anything. Just watch." And he leaped up and down on the laboratory table, crunching test-tubes under his feet until his face came back to its usual yellow.

"Watch," he cried.

HE rushed to the window and flung it open. The low, slow, muttering mumble of the ocean came up and floated into the room. A few fluffy white clouds drifted gently across the sky: sunlight poured into the laboratory and cast the professor's black shadow across the floor. Even his shadow was evil looking, gnarled and bumpy.

"Look," he shouted, taking a flask out of one of the pockets of his smock. "Do you know what I have in here?" He waved it over his head and his white hair flew out in all directions. "Look well," he cried, "for I will tell you."

He told them.

"No," cried the students, "No," and one of them—a coed who was majoring in dramatics—cried, "No, no, not that. Anything but that."

"Yes," he screeched. "That."

"My goodness," said John, whose wife didn't let him swear, "Do you really mean it?"

"You wait and see," he said, and then he told them again what he had in the flask because he had so much enjoyed telling them the first time.

"I have the end of life on Earth in here," he said, and he whirled and threw it into the sea and leaned

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far out of the window and watched the flask fall, flickering and flashing in the sunlight, and he saw it smash down on the rocks and break open and spill into the water. Nobody pushed him out after it, which was too bad.

John wiped his forehead with a handy piece of asbestos, and he sighed a long and relieved sigh, and all the students sighed with him. "It was kind of you to throw it away," he said.

"Yeek," chuckled the professor, "You think I threw it away. Yeek, yeek, yeek." And he laughed so hard that he grabbed himself around the waist and doubled over, wheezing and gasping for breath, but nobody strangled him, which was too bad, too. The world would be a better place if students were to strangle professors more often. "Do you know what I had in that flask? The most deadly poison there is. Three cubic centimeters of it will poison every drop of salt water in every ocean on Earth, including the Scandinavian."

"Then I won't drink any more salt water," said John.

"Ha!" cried the professor. "It isn't poison for people. It's poison for fishes."

"Fishes!" the students shouted. One of them, a purist, held up his hand. "The plural of fish," he said, "is fish, the same as the singular, though the word fishes, too, is acceptable."

"Bah!" cried the old and evil professor. "There is no longer any need for a plural word for fish. I've poisoned 'em all. Sharks, eels, cod, and the smallest squiggly things at the bottom of the sea. I even threw in the whales and dolphins for good measure. There won't be a salt-water fish alive in a week. I predict the end of animal life on Earth in twelve years, two months and five days." He looked at his watch. "That will be at three-fifteen on a Friday afternoon. Don't make any dates for later than that." And then he went "yeek, yeek" again.

"Look out the window," he said. "They're already coming to the surface!" This was true: white-bellied and dead, fish were floating on the top of the sea. "And John," the professor cried, looking at him in a very hideous manner, "There's no use your trying to stop me, for I've already set the poison to work and there is no antidote possible."

The students looked at each other, smiling. One of them raised his hand. "Professor," he asked, "Haven't you overlooked something?"

"Yes," shouted the professor eagerly. "I forgot to tell you. You failed your last examination. You did your diagrams in black ink instead of in blue."

"That's not what I meant," the student said. "You may have killed all the fish, and that will be tough on people who live on fish and on the seals too, no doubt, but I don't see how you've ended life on Earth."

"Look at John," the professor screamed, leaping high into the air in delighted leaps. "Look at John. John knows how."

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Everybody looked at John. He was sitting unhappily on the floor of the laboratory among the dust and broken bottles, holding his head in his hands. "Ecology," he said.

"Yeek, yeek;" chuckled the professor, and he kept on chuckling until he was saying "yeekology, yeekology." And he wheezed and gurgled and said "Tell them what ecology is, John."

JOHN told them. "It's like this," he said. "Everything fits together. If you shoot a lot of moose, the coyotes that live on moose meat die off from starvation—those that can't catch what moose remain—the lack of coyotes lets the next generation of moose grow up in peace so you get a lot of moose, but this plentiful supply of moose lets the coyotes that remain eat well and lets them bring up a lot of little coyotes to eat the moose meat."

"Moose, mice," somebody shouted, "What does that have to do with fish?"

"Fish eat seaweed," John said.

"Fish eat other fish," said somebody.

"But the first fish, he eats seaweed or little things that live in the seaweed."

"So?"

"So seaweed isn't going to get eaten."

"Well?"

John looked unhappily at the professor, who was dancing along the edge of the blackboard.

"So the seaweed is going to spread and spread until it covers the whole surface of the ocean," said John; and the professor jumped down from the blackboard thump! to the floor. "Right!" he cried, "And if I didn't always fail everybody I'd give you an A for your analysis. It's the end of life on Earth."

The students looked at one another. "It won't smell that bad," one said. "We can always move inland."

"Aha!" shouted the old and evil professor. "Don't you realize that a blanket of seaweed—of nasty seaweed, the kind you can't eat—is going to spread out over every bit of salt water on Earth, over three fifths of the globe? Can't you see? Ask John. And remember, John, there's no antidote for the poison and the water will stay poisoned forever, so there's nothing you can do." And away he went to tell the news to the president of the old and famous university.

"John," said the other students, "It will no doubt be unpleasant, but why will it kill off all other life on earth?"

"Rain," said John unhappily. "It won't rain. The seaweed will keep the oceans from evaporating. The rivers and streams and lakes will all dry up. Vegetation will wither and die: No rain, no rain at all."

The students all looked glum, for they realized that there was nothing they could do now to stop the spread of the poison. The world was doomed. "Golly," they said.

John went home sadly to tell his wife, and she gave the problem ten

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seconds' thought. Fortunately, she was a smart girl.

IN seven days every fish in every ocean, including the big fish, little fish, and middle-sized fish, was dead; and--the professor was running all over the campus, rubbing his bony hands together and going "yeek, yeek" at everyone he saw. He was proud, for he knew that very few people have been able to end the world.

"John," he cried, "This time you have been unable to stop me."

But John didn't look worried.

Six months and four days passed, and the professor came back into the laboratory where the students were all hard at work making bad smells in the test tubes and blowing things up and cheating on examinations. He looked at the watch on his thin wrist and he laughed horribly. "Today is the day," he cried. "And now is the time. All the fish died on schedule. The seaweed has now had its chance to grow. Faster, faster, and faster. No fish to keep it down. At this very moment the last available inch of ocean is being covered with seaweed. It will never rain again." And he leaped across the laboratory and screamed in his joy. His evil heels went thump! thump! on the floor as he danced his evil dance of triumph. "Look," he cried. "Look at my work. Behold the end of the world. Behold the oceans covered with seaweed."

He flung open the window.

A ship moved slowly along the horizon, trailing a gentle wreath of smoke behind it. The sun glittered cheerfully on the dancing waves and the water splashed up against the base of the cliff. Splash! it went, Splash!

The professor turned back to the laboratory. His face was the color of poison ivy. "John!" he cried, "Is this your doing?"

"You should have looked out before," said John, and all the students laughed and went "yeek, yeek."

The professor leaped from the window, but he was too evil to get hurt. He bashed down on the rocks and grabbed up a handful of water; it trickled through his fingers, shining in the sun. He climbed back up the cliff, looking like a huge and somewhat clumsy bat, and came back into the laboratory. "What did you do?" he screamed. "What did you do?"

John smiled. "You made a poison to kill all the fish in the sea so the seaweed would grow and shut off the rain."

"Yes, yes. I did that. It was foolproof, foolproof. What did you do? Why is there water?"

John grinned at him. "You made a poison that killed the fish." He blushed a little. "It was my wife's idea. I made one to kill the seaweed."

THE END

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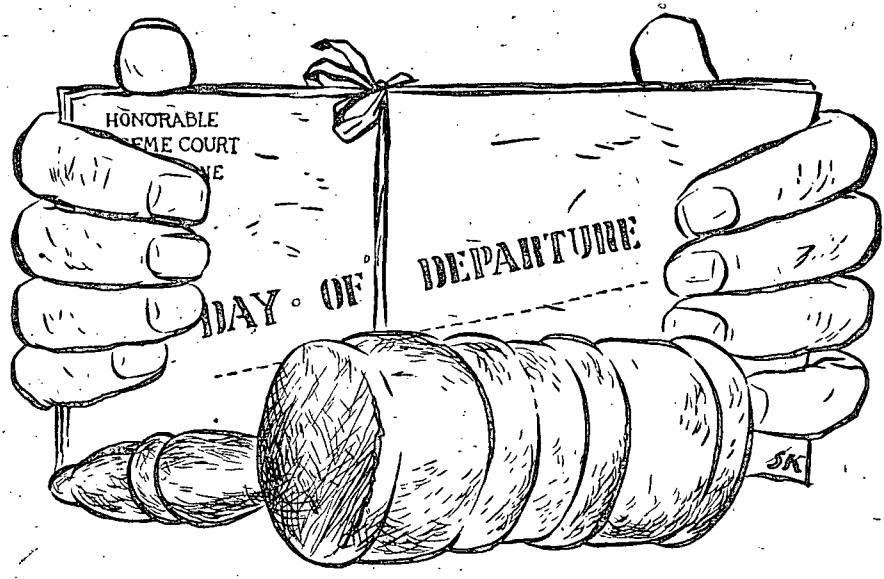

By Alan J. Ramm

JUDGE Nadiene mounted the steps to take his seat in the court. The dignity of the occasion demanded that he move slowly, but his mind was a chaotic whirl. The Day of Departure always left him emotionally limp. Gathering his robes carefully about himself, he sat down.

"The lists, please," he requested.

The Clerk of the Court passed them up to him. He felt the thickness of the pack. It seemed that there were more every time.

Nadiene forced himself to look at the crowd of silent unfortunates staring at him. Every one an atavist: murderers; prostitutes; embezzlers; rapists. While science had long since eliminated disease, occasional abnormal behavior seemed to slip by the Council For Improvement Through Eugenics.

"The Court is ready to proceed," he said at last. "It is the law that each prisoner be given the Right of Choice. This obligates the Court to explain the Right.

"Each of you has been convicted of some crime against society. For this we bear no malice. However, we dare not permit your continued presence in our midst because such abnormalities as yours have been proven to be emotionally contagious. This places society in a difficult position

Illustrated by Sam Kweskin

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since capital punishment has long been outlawed.

"Therefore you are given the Right of Choice. First, you may elect suicide. In that case we will designate a time interval, and you will carry out your own sentence—method and exact moment to be determined by you.

"Second, you may choose Departure. This consists of immediate movement by Teletransfer to our penal colony. There you will live out your normal life span within a society which is more tolerant of your peculiarities. Are there any questions?"

"Is Departure painful, Your Honor?"

"Of course not. Each of you has taken the local Teletransfer many times. The distance in case of Departure is greater but still painless."

"How will the colony accept us?" another asked.

"That will be your own problem. To help we will psychovoid your present memories and replace them with a psychopast adjusted to your new environment.

"Any further questions? No? Then as the Clerk reads your name, answer with, 'Suicide' or 'Departure,' whichever is your choice."

"Guine?"

"Departure!"

"Sissle?"

"Departure!"

HOURS later, after the last name has been called and the prisoners had all departed, Judge Nadiene rose wearily.

"Depressing, isn't it, Your Honor?" the Clerk remarked. "What a waste of life and training."

"That's certainly true. But have you ever wondered what their arrival means to Earth?"

★ ★ ★

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Special Features

The MAN From TOMORROW

Personals

Letters

Book Reviews

Other Worlds Book Shelf

THIS special section of OTHER WORLDS is for your own participation and enjoyment. Here you will find your letters to the editor; your jokes (for which we will pay $1 each); your personal messages to your fellow readers (published free); reviews of science fiction books worthy of your attention; the latest news of what's going on in the world of authors, editors, rival magazines, fan clubs, even individual readers; your bookshop; cartoons; fact articles; interviews with individuals in the public eye and many others. If you have any suggestions as to improvements, and additional features, remember your word is our golden rule.

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The Man from TOMORROW

ONE of our readers writes in: "Maybe your Truman prediction was a matter of timing—and the reference was to his 1948 triumph." Let's not quibble. Our Truman prediction was wrong. Unless Stephenson should be shot, or be eliminated in some other way. The situation that would exist then would be interesting. What *would* happen in that event? The point of interest to us, however, is accuracy. If predictions cannot be made with accurate *timing*, then they are worthless, except as interesting bits of retrospect, *after* they happen. Such as the Nostradamus predictions, hardly any of which have come *specifically* true. And one suspects those that did, and wonders if, during the intervening centuries, some enterprising "editor" hasn't done a little "modernizing."

However, a rather startling number of our predictions are coming true. Not the kind that can be deduced through logical reasoning, or through "advance information," such as a schedule which can inform us that Boston will play Chicago at Chicago on August 12th, which is obtained as a printer's proof before it is actually issued to the public. Among these is the prediction of the giant green meteorites which explode, make no noise, and leave no fragments. That this came true no one can deny. But HOW could such a prediction, so specific, be made? Then there is the NEW wave of "spaceship" publicity, and radar-visioned flying saucers, definitely claimed now to be material and not hallucination, and even more, *spaceships*. And the discovery of the Earth's Saturn-like ring (just announced by *Science News Letter*.

In our March, 1952 issue, we made twenty-five predictions. Of that number six still have not had time to come true, and fifteen have come true. Four have been wrong. That figures out far beyond chance; about 75% accuracy. But the amazing thing is that six of these predictions are of the "wild-eyed variety" and all six came true!

On ONE prediction we used reason. We DID NOT "just imagine" it. And we were wrong! We tried it as a test. We learned. We learned that we are right an amazing number of times, if we don't THINK about it. We're going to give you some of that

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type of prediction exclusively from now on.

But many of our readers have objected to the "glamor" with which we have surrounded this, by claiming a "man from 500 years in our future," a "little voice inside us" tells us these things. They would prefer we gave absolutely no source—in other words, did not "ham" it up. Well, what difference does it make? So far, we've proved at least one point—that a high percentage of accuracy *can* be made by methods other than the doubtful ones of presenting "pre-knowledge" as "pre-science." By that we mean those predictors who get "advance information" and then pass it off as something from the crystal ball. Well, okay, let's not ham it up. Let's just say what "pops" into our mind, and see how often we hit the mark. For those readers who have made the request, we will comply. In fact, we take it as an order. So, from now on, the Man From Tomorrow is Ray Palmer. But we warn you of one thing—we'll never make personal predictions, and we absolutely refuse to allow anybody to credit them to supernatural powers. And we'll bet you we can beat the record of any seer in existence, and with more amazing predictions than they would dare make.

Let's go!

Recently somebody predicted a flying saucer would land in Washington. We say it will NOT.

The recent earthquakes in California (claimed to be more severe than the 1906 San Francisco earthquake) are only the first of a long series. There will be further loss of life in the present series, the duration of which will not be more than three years.

There will be three sensational announcements of space ships seen in the vicinity of the Earth.

The Earth will be found to be peopled by beings whose existence was never before suspected. These being will NOT be our species, but will be intelligent. They will be discovered by Radar!

Television will be unlimited in range within five years.

Professor Picard's proposition to go to Mars in a balloon will be hotly argued, although to the most unlearned person, it should be obvious that it is impossible. The argument will come from a *lunatic fringe* which will seize upon the announcement that our atmosphere extends a tremendous distance into space. They will ignore the fact that the tenuosity of it makes it virtually empty space. They will base their claims on a new "magnetic science." Saucerman Scully will be the (not so) unwilling "high priest" of the new cult—and with good reason, because he will profit by it financially. (He writes books.)

The government, by 1956, will begin to spend billions to rehabilitate the soil of this country. Vast new advances in "natural" agriculture will be geared to technical advances. The use of chemicals to fertilize will be seriously questioned, and the bulk of the money spent by the government

(Concluded on page 157)

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personals

For sale, books in perfect condition but no d/w: the 3 "Skylark" books, Spacehounds of I.P.C., Triplanetary, 1st Lensman, The Forbidden Garden, Legion of Space, Book of Ptath. Lest Darkness Fall, Wheels of If, Incomplete Enchanter, Castle of Iron, Who Goes There, Mightiest Machine, Incredible Planet, Moon is Hell, Sinister Barrier, Without Sorcery, A Martian Odyssey, Black Flame; $2 each, aSF, Oct. '34; May, Aug., Sept. '39; 50c each. aSF, Aug. & Sept. '45; Feb., Mar., Oct. & Dec. '46; all others to date, 35c. OW & MAG complete at 35c each. TWS & SS since '44 at 25c each. 1st 7 F&FS at 35c each. SSS and PS from '49 to date and FA from '50 at 25c each. 1st Marvel ('51) and 1st six revived Future at 25c each. All 3 Worlds Beyond, 35c each. All mags. in good to mint. Min. order $3. Edwin Butenhof, 2534 Ridge Rd., Berkeley 9, Cal. . . . Stf and fantasy art fans please write Robert E. Gilbert, 509 W. Main St., Jonesboro, Tenn. . . . *Would like to correspond with 15 or 16 year old fen or femmes. Dan MacMurray, 512 45th St., Union City, N. J.* . . . Would like to hear from anyone interested in stf or from any stf clubs in Pa. Have large number of EC Publications (Vault of Horror, Weird Science & Fantasy, Two-Fisted). Will trade or sell. Bacil Guiley, 219 Jefferson St., Warren, Pa. . . . *Michael Wigodsky, 402 W. Clay, Houston 19, Texas has for sale many lots of excerpts dating back to '32 and incl. many famous stories. Write for list* . . . For sale at 30% below list, mint condition: "Travelers of Space," "Journey to Infinity," "Men Against the Stars," "Worlds of Wonder," "Humanoids," "Dreadful Sanctuary," "Sinister Barrier," "The Torch," "Slan," "Bullard of the Space Patrol," "Wine of the Dreamers," "Double in Space," "Ship of Destiny," "Four Sided Triangle," "Llana of Gathol," "Pirates of Venus." Will sell or trade or rent over 500 books and mags. of stf, fantasy or supernatural. R. F. Matthews, 5656 Clemens, St. Louis 12, Mo. . . . *Wanted: back issues of comics "The Haunt of Fear" No. 16; "The Vault of Horror," 1 thru 12, 14, 15, 18, 21 & 22; "Tales From the Crypt," 1 thru 19, 23 & 28; Planet Comics any issue except 32, 36, 39, 40, 42, thru 51 and 62 on; Tarzan Comics, any except 134 & 161. All must have covers, will pay 10c each for horror comics and Planets following No. 36; will pay 15c for Tarzan and for Planet prior to No. 36. Ronald Smith, 332*

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E. Date St., Oxnard, Calif. . . . Have about 75 to 100 stf mags. for sale at cover price or thereabouts, scattered issues of everything from AS to WT. Send for price list. Jim Maneval, 89 Ontario St., Corning, N. Y. . . . *New fan club in St. Petersburg wants members locally or by correspondence, no age limit. Interested fans please write Edith Lois Heilweil, 2127 8th Avenue North, St. Petersburg, Fla.* . . . GHUVNA, 10c per copy, mimeoed zine published quarterly by J. M. Fillinger Jr., 148 Landon St., Buffalo 8, N. Y. Contains 28 pages of fiction articles, poetry and artwork . . . *Ronald Rentz, 130 Vera St., W. Hartford, Conn. wants the address of any fen living in Hartford. He's recruiting members for the Conn. S-F Society* . . . OPUS 2/25c 5/50c. 28 pages, mimeoed, cartoons, articles and fan art. Pubbed by W. Max Keasler, 420 S. 11th St., Poplar Bluff, Mo. . . . *Am planning to publish a monthly BOOK & MAGAZINE ADVERTISER, about selling & trading material. Ad rates are 2c-wd., copies of the mag. free to those who write. George R. Anglado, 719 Dorries, Biloxi, Miss.* . . . Will pay 5c for All Star Comics No. 1 thru 5; All Flash Comics, No. 1 thru 5; Superman Comics, No. 1 thru 6. Ted White, 1014 N. Tuckahoe St., Falls Church, Va. . . . *Please send all inquiries about the Varients to Sheldon J. Deretchin, 1234 Utica Ave., Brooklyn 3, N. Y. instead of Hal Hostetler* . . . I am 19 years old and as I am going into the service shortly I would like to correspond with any fans. Martin Handler, 5208 Tilden Ave., Brooklyn 3, N. Y. . . . *Wanted: Book of poems, "Time and the Rock," by Conrad Aikins. State price* . . . *M. Jones c/o Mr. I. Warner, 5 E. 118 St., Apt. 26, New York, N. Y.* . . . I will lend back issues of aSF. For further details write Underwood Dudley, 1594 Metropolitan Ave., New York 62, N. Y. . . . *I want to get an APA started. Name will be Cosmic APA, need 20 members. M. McNeil, 2010 McClendon, Houston 25, Texas* . . . CURRENT SCIENCE-FICTION WEEKLY, Intergalactic Publications, Box 1529, Grand Central Sta., New York 17, N. Y. Weekly, 10c ea., 12—$1, 24—$2. Mimeoed zine containing news of fandom's activities . . . *Our little magazine is devoted to the finest in amateur non-fiction field. Covers most subjects. Fanzine reviews and free plugs to fanzines. Ad swapping. 6/$1 or at 15c. Stanley E. Crouch, Sterling, Va.* . . . For sale: Every aSF from June, '40 to date. June, '40 to Dec., '45. 75c each; Jan., '46 to Dec., '49, 50c each; Jan., '50 to date, 25c each. Perfect condition. 20% off for orders of 12 or more. H. Malamud, P.O. Box 24, College Park, Md. . . . *For sale, number of science-fiction mags. and comic books or will trade them for back issues of aSF and Galaxy. William Maycock, 527 24th St., Ogden, Utah.* . . .

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LETTERS

CLARK PUBLISHING COMPANY, 806 DEMPSTER STREET, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

DAVID G. VAN ARNAM

Would like to know why (you) say in a recent issue of OW, that many famous writers have been appearing in OW right along, only under aliases, because aSF doesn't like writers (whose names were made famous by aSF) to cash in on these names in other mags. Whassa matter, rap, where's that fighting spirit you so often display? What *is* the setup about aSF and the names of their famous authors? If aSF has all rights on the writers, they can't appear in another magazine, new name or not. Or *can* aSF reserve an author's name? Well?

Dark Universe,
1740-34th Ave. N.
St. Petersburg, Fla.

I think I'm being slightly misquoted, but no matter. We do have several writers who use pennames in our magazine, and their real names in aSF, and they are very good names —but the reason isn't because aSF won't let them. Let's not paint aSF and Campbell black, because they are really the whitest magazine and editor in the business. Let's repeat that even more vociferously. Campbell and aSF are just about the swellest science fiction combination your editor ever heard about, and Campbell, as a person, is plenty tops, with everybody! He's just not guilty of anything unfair, and we want to squelch that right now! As for Dianetics, he's also in the right. As you know, he's not using it in aSF since his readers asked him not to. What more can a guy do? To get back to the reason for pennames in our magazine, it's because WE haven't got the prestige the writer would like to see us have, and we don't PAY as much! So, the writer feels he isn't going to give us for nothing something Campbell is willing to pay for. He's being fair to Campbell. We have no objection to this, and if we want it changed, all we have to do is become a leading magazine, like aSF, and pay as much as Campbell does. The only reason we ever mentioned it is because some reader asked us why we didn't get good *writers like aSF, and we couldn't resist saying we HAD some of them, so there! Besides, we use plenty of aSF writers under their own names now. Russell, de Camp, del Rey, Sturgeon, etc., Anyway, in OW, the story's the thing. And judging from your recent letters, we're ringing that bell quite often, name or no name!—Rap.*

PAUL WILLINGANZ

I had to write after reading August OW. This issue brought me two

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novels which are among the best OW has ever published. No, I don't mean the Shaver story. This is little more than a horse opera in space. But he does try so hard. To continue. these two are PLEASE ME PLUS THREE and TRACK OF THE BEAST. I'd rate either of them way ahead of supposedly great THESE ARE MY CHILDREN. *Little Miss Boss* seems to be a steal from a Superman comic strip turned feminine for appeal and set on Mars for interest. For me, this story was a cut and dried affair that should never have found its way inside OW's sacred covers.

TRACK OF THE BEAST builds up interest from the first, keeps you glued to the story until it hits you with a surprising, smash ending that leaves you with the feeling that this author HAS IT. More of him, please.

PLEASE ME PLUS THREE may impress some people as stupid, but I feel that here is a perfect example of what a stf story should be. Sometimes you pick a story which simply tells a story as a comic strip would without any science in it at all. You do this under the assumption that the stf reader wants ENTERTAINMENT, not education. By carrying this no education policy too far, however, you defeat your purpose of making the story entertaining. True, a story should not be PRIMARILY educational, but it must have some sound scientific facts in it. PLEASE ME PLUS THREE has these two qualities in perfect balance. If we merely want our heroes hopping around on space-ships, we can go to the nearest store and buy "Space Patrol."

I'm not against long serials, but when an author builds his main plot and the ending, and then puts thousands of words into a multitude of minor plots in the middle of a story simply to prolong the story, it loses appeal. This, apparently, is what Rog Phillips did on *These Are My Children*. I know I'll get into an argument on this one, but I'd much rather see a serial like Richard Ashby's ACT OF GOD. This article belongs at the top of my list of top serials.

It will be interesting to read your scorching (probably) reply to my criticisms. But that's what makes OW interesting. I'd much rather see it that way than as just a means of carrying stf story material. I hope that Rap's prediction of OW folding will be one of the supposed 10% that won't come true.

54 Park Blvd.
Lancaster, N. Y.

You've certainly put down some basics. We're very much interested in this type of analysis from readers, and though we don't always agree (from experience) we always make changes in our non-policy to suit. In other words, we never stop learning. And you readers are the only ones we can learn from. You'll get more stories of this type. We've got one called QBB by Alan E. Nourse, coming up next issue which reminds us of what you said about PLEASE ME PLUS THREE. And in the January issue, FAST PASSAGE by H. B.

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Fyfe reminds us of what you said about TRACK OF THE BEAST. But say, wait until you read THE MACHINE THAT FLOATS, by Joe Gibson and FIELD OF BATTLE by William F. Temple! As for "scorching" replies, do WE ever do that! We thought we were being cool and level-headed. Oh well, there goes our ego again! Down a couple more pegs. Hothead . . . he infers! Who's this guy, Willinganz, anyway . . .—Rap.

MRS. CLARK WILLIAMS

Have been reading OTHER WORLDS for a year, and think that it is tops. All the stories were great with the exception of THE SUNSMITHS. The first part started out fine, but the second part wasn't so hot. I was under the impression that God made the world in six days and rested the seventh. On page 64 it says it was done in seven days. Shaver had better read his Bible better. The cover and back is really a swell job. In fact, your covers are always good, half-naked gals and all. Keep up the good work and I'll always read OTHER WORLDS.

324 N. Kansas,
Marceline, Mo.

How come your editor didn't catch Shaver's error? He's always claiming he has read the Bible! But then, Shaver has the Earth all created long before the Bible says it was. And he has people on it a lot longer than 6,000 and some odd years. Apparently a lot of science fiction writers don't consult their Bibles when they write about the past of the Earth!—Rap.

RON SMITH

There seems to be a plot against me up there at the Clark Pub. Co. The letter by Mr. Barnes convinces me of that. A few days ago I received my copy of FATE. (You see, I am a loyal subscriber to both your mags.) It was so badly mutilated that I had to send it back, because it was not suitable for collection. I suppose this is due to the flimsy wrapping. And now I get my copy of OW. It's not in TOO BAD condition, but it certainly isn't in newsstand condition. So when you say "You get your copy perfect." I wonder, now who is he talking to? And I say, Oh, yeah! Come on, Rap, get my mags to me in good condition. Use an armed guard if you have to, but, please!

Now that I have that off my chest, the next thing I will HAVE to mention is the back cover painting. Cover paintings of any type make a mag more attractive, and this one by Jones was very good. Congratulations on this milestone. Unfortunately, tho, the front cover was not so good. The main thing wrong is its lack of color. Not enough contrast between the objects and the background of space. OTHER WORLDS and Smith both can do better than this. Smith is a very good artist, and your art director, but can't you get a bit more variety in your choice of cover artists? No matter how pleasing anything is, people sooner or later get too much. Too much of one artist for too long is too much. It will irrevocably cause a magazine to become a

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little stale. You have only had 5 different cover artists on OW in your first 21 issues. Most of the covers have been by Smith. I'm glad to hear you are developing new talent, and especially happy to know it is an artist. But let's have VARIETY in OW. And that goes for authors as well as artists.

Are you going to change your cover format, or at least ask the readers if they think it should be changed?

Oh. More about covers. Sorry to hear you bought 10 covers by Jones. He's good, natch. But a well-balanced diet is only accomplished by variety, and you aren't producing enough variety in OW. You ought to do a little explaining about your back covers. It isn't necessary for art's sake, but it makes them more interesting. Maybe you could have some more contests and have the readers guess what's happening on the covers, or something like that. You also might dig up some promising amateur talent if you had some contests having writers to think up stories around the covers. Have some story contests, like MOF and aSF has, and you will produce a variety crop in your garden.

I approve of serials, but longer installments than you use are better, and I like a few more short stories than you've been using lately. Let's not have so many novelettes in each issue.

I am beginning to find interest in your Man From Tomorrow. I can see this is going to be very popular. Even with me, I guess. I didn't pay much attention to it at first, but you are livening it up now.

The more I think about that third idea of yours you put down in your June editorial, the more I wonder just how great and smart a guy you are. That was a good idea, an idea that could make OW the greatest, and I wonder if you meant it—if you are the editor of OW, or just another science-fiction fan like the rest of us—a fan who wants his favorite mag to be the best one, but isn't hampered by being an editor? Two different creatures, fan and editor, which makes it a little hard for the two to work together. But two fans—well, two fans can do anything together. Nothing can stop two stf fans or 100,000 of them — except maybe an editor. So I'm still wondering, and I hope I'll find out soon, whether you are fan or editor, and if OTHER WORLDS has a future.

An idea about the Personal column. Why not classify the items, so it will be easier to find the type of ad you're looking for? Like they do in newspapers, with sections for fan clubs, fanzines, magazines for sale, magazines wanted, etc.

332 E. Date St.
Oxnard, Calif.

Any reader who gets his subscription copy in mutilated condition, just drop us a card and we'll send him another. Does that settle that? Most of our subscription copies get there A-1, but sometimes accidents happen in the P.O. Variety on the covers? Well, by now you should realize we've anticipated you . . . Jones' ten covers

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will be spaced out among others, never fear. Yes, we are a fan, first and foremost, and also *an editor. As for Personals, we'll talk it over with Bea.—Rap.*

PHILIP CASTORA

This is the first fan letter I've ever written. As stereotyped as that line is, I wanted you to know that I think enough of your magazine to write to you first.

First I want to say that you have a good magazine in OW—not perfect, by any means, but if you keep up your improvements, weekly publication won't be too often, as far as I'm concerned. But you're going to have to work harder just to maintain your present standards, now that you're coming out monthly, which I hope occurs by the time this sees print.

Secondly, I want to say that I admire you for your daring editorial policy. I know of no other editor with nerve enough to end one serial and begin another in the same issue, as you did in the July issue—which I thought one of the best in the eleven months I've been reading science-fiction. Your policy seems to be paying off, too. You can't lose readers and seriously think about going monthly at the same time.

Thirdly, I want to say that I like your editorials very much. You write like a human being, rather than the ordinary stuffed-shirt editor. Too many other editors try, for some reason, to be very dignified. The day science-fiction becomes dignified, I will quit reading it and go back to watching "Captain Video"—pardon the expression; I'll wash my typewriter with soap.

Should you decide to print this letter, I want to inform the erstwhile (is that right?) uninformed of Pittsburgh and vicinity that there definitely is a fanclub in our fair city. (That's right—no smoke for several years, now, any reports to the contrary notwithstanding.) For information, write me at the address at the end of this letter or call or dial LEhigh 1-0318 and ask for me. I'll give you all the information about the Pittsburgh Science Fiction Association you want.

331 Ashland Ave.
Pittsburgh 28, Pa.

We have an idea at this point. If any of you readers are interested in forming science fiction groups in your locality, this editor will be glad to send you a list of the people who subscribe to OW in your town or state. Or any already existing groups can contact new members the same way. Glad to be of service.—Rap.

HENRY MOSKOWITZ

You're a darn stinker. To date, there have been three guys—two in the letter column and the other an editor—who have said things to and about one Raymond A. Palmer. You—he—told them off so well that the fen who were all set to defend you—him—didn't have anything left to say. You told L. W. Carpenter off good and proper. But you left nothing for us "bread-and-butter" guys to say!

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It was good to see back covers again—so far FANTASTIC's haven't been too good. It was also good to see Robert Gibson Jones again—his work, anyway. His last cover was for the December, 1951, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. So you bought ten covers from him. That must have made him happy since it would be his first sale in about a half year. The Back Cover was very good. The only thing I had to gripe—small it is, too—about is that RGJ's name was almost completely cut off. Only the letter "R" remained near the right edge of the painting.

Malcolm Smith's Front Cover was also very good—slightly better than the other. I also enjoyed the rundown on him. Of course, he is also Art Editor of IMAGINATION, you know.

What happened to your associate editor? And why the change of address?

The August issue carried a strong line-up of authors. I was glad to see another Little Miss Ignorance—alias Little Miss Martian—story by E. E. Evans, *Little Miss Boss*. I wonder what the next title will be. There is another, no? Shaver is doing well. I'll run down the story next month.

I would rather have "News of The Month" than "The Man From Tomorrow."

You know, that within a year's time OW should be the best stf mag out. But it won't. The reason being that a great many—too many—fen are stinkers. Once some one makes a mistake, they never forget/forgive it. Your mistake—so called—was the Shaver Mystery. Now many fen see to it that your name is a kiss-of-death. And they should be ashamed. They were starting the same treatment for John W. Campbell, Jr., of aSF. A good thing for him that he didn't continue with Dianetics.

W. J. Barnes should complain to his magazine dealer if he can't get perfect copies of OW in that way. When I sent RAP my five bucks, I told him that I was taking a sub just to see the mag go monthly. I also told him that I would buy another copy on the newsstands because I kept only perfect copies of OW in my files. I have had two issues of OW by mail so far, and neither have been in as good or better condition than those that I buy at the stands. The reason being that the envelopes are not quite thick enough. They do tend to get banged up in transit.

Finally, RAP, I have one suggestion and two questions.

Stop using a perfectly good inside cover—get it back for features.

What does Smith do with that model? And where is that Tharn story?

Three Bridges, N. J.

Our former associate editor ran off and got married! We changed our address because we ran out of space—OW is expanding, you know. As for the fans and the Shaver Mystery, we think you're mistaken. We've been to two conventions now and certainly met a lot of friendly people (that is, two conventions since our starting OW). They have not only forgiven,

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they are solidly behind us — you should see how they rallied to help me make OW monthly! Smith uses that model for a salt-shaker. Howard Browne is too busy with his new magazines to write Tharn now, but we'll keep after him.—Rap.

JOHN E. CLARKE

Having been an ardent Science fiction fan since any such was first published, I deem myself perfectly competent to judge of the quality of any such periodical.

Pursuant to this very high opinion of myself, I have awarded OTHER WORLDS a place equal to that of the best three or four other S.F. magazines, and I intend to read each issue of OW as fast as they are out.

So far, no one else is publishing any better stories than you are in OTHER WORLDS.

Come September 7th, I shall have lived on this planet for seventy years and ever since I came down out of the foothills of the Big Smoky Mountains at the age of sixteen years I have been studying the psychology of the humans that I found scattered around over this country.

I do not agree with a lot of Freud's theories. What comes to mind now is your answer to CARLA de PAULA LOPES in the April number of OTHER WORLDS. FREUD did *not* invent dianetics. Even before Freud it was suspected that crazy people were crazy because of something that had happened to them. The Freudian system made a patient recall only those shocking things or events which had once been a part of the conscious memory and later forgotten.

Hubbard's system brought the recall of memories of events which had taken place while the patient was unconscious, something which the Freudian system could not do.

Some seven or eight years ago, I allowed myself to be persuaded to take the case of a young man who, by one of the best Freudian psychiatrists had been pronounced incurable and his folks had been advised to have him confined in an institution, as he was a dangerous person to be allowed to be at liberty. Using the Freudian system, I could bring the patient to a state of awareness. But each time he was sent out to work and certain subjects came up and were discussed before him he promptly went off the deep end again.

At last, in desperation, I tried the therapy advised by that upstart, Ron Hubbard, and much to my pleased surprise, in less than 13 hours his troubles were resolved and today, he is a perfectly well-balanced and better than normal man.

I agree with you that it takes a more than average intelligence to administer the dianetic therapy, and Hubbard himself says that this therapy cannot be self administered. I am retired and not a very well man, but if I had fifty more years to live instead of possibly a year or two, I would spend that time teaching dianetic therapy. And of course, I'd spend a lot of my leisure hours reading SCIENCE FICTION.

I enjoyed most of the Richard

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Shaver stories, though we did get slightly over-dosed with them. The main fault with them was that they were not scattered out more. I did not accept any part of them as facts. I regarded them as very entertaining stories written by a man with a superb imagination.

I hope that OTHER WORLDS gets so good that you will be compelled to put it out every two weeks. If this letter sounds infantile, it's probably because I am in my second childhood, if there is such a state of being.

511½ Lighthouse Ave.
Pacific Grove, Calif.

You certainly are qualified. And the dianetics people should be pleased over your letter.—Rap.

JUNE KLAES

This letter is to OW, but mostly it's to you as it's editor and—more important, but part of that—to you as a person.

I'm absolutely fascinated.

I'm probably what you'd call a baby in this field of SF reading, feeling sometimes as I read, as though I'm getting only the haziest idea of what I'm reading. So I don't know too very much about SF or SF editors.

But YOU amaze me!

Besides that, you amuse me. I get a real bang out of reading the letter column just to see what comments you might have to make. I haven't the intellect or vocabulary or whatever necessary to enable me to describe exactly just how your editorial personality strikes me, but I sure know there's plenty of it. It's bouncy, it sings, it laughs, it's pleasantly serious, it's brilliant, and best of all, it's warm and spreads itself out like a patch of sunlight. In other words, I think you, Raymond A. Palmer, are pretty wonderful people. The same goes for OW.

Can you tell me anything about the Rosicrucians? Is that a phony deal, or are they "for real"?

No Address

June, you're a darling! What nice things you say! I like you! As for the Rosicrucians, I don't know much about them. Guess the only way to find out is to investigate. They often advertise.—Rap.

ALAN ROGERS

In connection with an "anonymous" letter printed in "OW" issue of July, "letters to the editor" section.

I have been a S.F. reader for the past 15 years and from time to time have noticed similar letters appearing in the various S.F. magazines and have often wondered what the score was in this connection.

The following is along somewhat the same lines—after considerable thought and research I have found that there does exist a percentage of the population who are what I call "SENSATIVES," that is, people who are supersensative to themselves, to others, and to the forces of nature. They have an extremely inquiring mind and are constantly thinking and analyzing themselves, other peo-

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ple and society in general trying to figure things out. They all have ESP faculties. In their early years they try to talk to others about what they think, dream, and what they can sense and do, but usually they are received with ridicule and rebuffs by those who cannot understand, and this leads the "sensative" to stop mentioning the subject to others and he begins to think he is unique, peculiar possibly, and alone in his qualities. Some have this quality smothered but others do develop it to quite an extent.

As far as I know there does not exist a publicly known medium for this type of person to get in touch with others who are the same. Since this type of person is in a great many cases naturally drawn to the reading and writing of Science Fiction I am of the opinion that it would be desirable to create an organization which would act as the focal-point where they could write, get to know one another, arrange to meet and discuss, exchange experiences, and generally help one another.

I have already started such a group and would welcome the opportunity of providing this service to others.

I note with great satisfaction what you say your motives and ambitions are as stated in the July issue of "OW," and think that mine are quite similar in the general sense.

317 MacDonald St.
New Glasgow, N. S.

OTHER WORLDS prefers to remain neutral on such things as this, but any of our readers who are interested in Mr. Rogers' ideas are recommended to contact him directly. As for being possessed of any ESP powers, we wonder if all of us aren't in that category to varying degrees? I once filled an inside straight on a hunch, breaking up a pair of aces. You have to have ESP, or be nuts to do that!—Rap.

BOBBY WARNER

A few words anent the July ish of OTHER WORLDS, which waxed exceedingly readable after the first few lines.

First, I still maintain that your editorial is the best in the present field (thus, of course, making you the best editor). Heck, Rap, you make fandom sound just like one big, happy family—which it is. So, you are enthralled by a sunset, too, huh? I just can't get enough of seeing the last rays of the sun glint off the bellies of a patch of slowly drifting clouds myself. Just call me Nature Boy.

If this is the new Shaver, throw the old one away! Man alive what writing. I didn't know the fellow had anything in him except deros and such. Ah, well, we can and are wrong at times. I await the next installment of THE SUN-SMITHS with avid anxiety. And much praise to you, Rap, for that Cartier' illo. But, say, when do we get another Bok? (Better still—when do we more BokS? I literally drool over those soft shades he employs.)

L. Sprague de Camp's little tale

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didn't come up to par with OW's high quality level, but, still, it's as good as any of the stuff that's passing for stf in some of the other mags today. If there were not mags such as OW on the stands today, stf would definitely be on the downgrade.

Haven't gotten around to reading Howard Dare's (new author?) THE ULTIMATE DEATH, but it looks promising.

What with all the mags in the stf field trying to attain a "maturity" level, I thought OTHER WORLDS would try for it too. But, thanks to you, Rap, it hasn't. You still shoot us simple, well-spoken, and frank editorials, and the policy is still no-policy. Leave maturity alone; it's a sure sign of age. And no matter how old OW becomes literally, please keep it young figuratively. Young, that is, in that it features material which is snappy, high in quality, and spiced with the stuff which makes classics.

P. O. Box 63
Bessmay, Texas

You get some terrific Bok on the back covers soon!—Rap.

TOM REAMY

Have you noticed the blooper you pulled in the July issue?

In the June issue in your "Open letter to Paul Fairman" you state that Amazing's 50,000 increase in readers was not caused by the Shaver Mystery as Fairman wrote in his article, but by the simple reason the 50,000 more copies of that issue were printed. Then in the article on Shaver in the July issue you say that the increase *was* caused by the Shaver Mystery. Which are we fans suppose to believe?

I haven't read any of the July issue yet. Where have I seen that picture for THE GOLDEN GUARDSMEN before? Really, are you that bad off?

For Heaven's sake let's not have another sequel to COLOSSUS or GOLDEN GUARDSMEN. I kept catching myself counting to see how many more pages there were when I was reading the COLOSSUS trilogy. I started the first installment of GG but gave up in disgust.

I think your serial policy still stinks. When you end one serial and begin another in the same issue, that's too much serial. You could at least wait until the next issue to begin another one. Or better yet, have an issue of complete stories between each serial.

In answer to a letter you stated that: "We only got tired of turning down all the good stories because they were long, and running tripe because it fit into the magazine." Well, I'll be glad when you get tired of turning down all the good stories because they are short and can't be made into serials and running tripe because they can. I get sick every time I buy an issue and find the concluding 20,000 words of a serial and the beginning 20,000 of another and two 5,000 word complete stories.

ACT OF GOD is the only fair serial you have run. The rest weren't worth reading.

The best issue of OW was issue

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number 12 when you printed the beautiful TIME FLAW by Russell Branch. You never will have another to compare with that.

Another thing is the covers. You used to have the most beautiful covers in the field. You also had variety. But now, for the last four issues you had spaceships zooming around on the cover. There's nothing wrong with spaceship — but every issue! Please have some with people, and not a McCauley girl either.

I'm glad you have abandoned the MAN FROM TOMORROW thing (or have you?) It was trying for sensationalism that wasn't there.

I'm sorry that I have so many bones to pick but, I'm sure even the most ardent serial lover will agree that you're going overboard.

The Cartier illo for THE SUNSMITHS was magnificent as usual. The Terry illos stunk as usual.

General Delivery
Andrews, Texas

Was it a blooper? Is a contradiction a blooper? Maybe I did it on purpose. Actually. Well, you have the facts in the case, and the math works out even screwier, if you take the trouble to work it out! Problem—if you sell 4 out of 7 apples, what happens when you offer 6 more for sale? Do you sell them all? As for what you're supposed to believe, nothing! Nothing like good old scientific proof, if you want to do any believing—but without it, play it safe. Don't plump for it or don't hoot at it. We think our serial policy stank too, and you'll note we've modified it. Okay, okay, we've changed from spaceships! How do you like the covers recently? Haven't abandoned the Man from Tomorrow. Just being coy, and waiting to spring a real surprise. Yeah, we're overboard, but we've climbed back aboard. Can't drown a fish. Cartier will love you, but sadly, he's escaped us. Escaped everybody, it seems. But when he draws, he'll draw for us too, we promise. Terry will hate you. But he'll keep on drawing, and who knows, maybe he'll do something you like too!—Rap.

The Man From Tomorrow

(Concluded from page 144)

will be on investigating the theory that all wastes should be returned to the soil. The result will be a complete reconstruction of all garbage and refuse disposal plants. Recovery of lost elements from the sea, purification, and return to the soil will solve the problem. Later, rivers will be forced to give up their soil loot before discharging into the sea.

There will be no THIRD WORLD WAR!

There will be no PEACE!

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In Oahspe these ethereans state quite plainly and simply what they think is good for us in this present age of atomic power and universal travel. First, they state what we should repudiate if we would escape misery. Second, what we should embrace and practice if we would be alive and happy. As one of their members states in Oahspe; "I am not come to captivate the ignorant and unlearned. I come to the wise and learned. And not to one man only but to thousands. That which I am uttering in these words in this place, I am also uttering in the souls of thousands, and I will bring them together."

You will, of course, want to examine, judge, and decide for yourself the validity of Oahspe's extensive statements. Decide for yourself just what and who Oahspe represents. And don't we all want to know who on earth is kidding who and why and how?

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Book Reviews

"THE HEADS OF CERBERUS" by Francis Stevens (POLARIS PRESS, Reading, Pa., 1952, $3.00)

"The Heads of Cerberus" by Francis Stevens is a superb example of bookmaking art. Boxed in a sturdy slip case, printed on special deckle-edged antique paper, and set in modern Electra type face—the volume is a delight to the eyes of a true book lover. Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, the Director of Fantasy Press, should be congratulated on this project which caters to the genuine collector and connoisseur. The price is $3.00 and can be obtained *only* from "POLARIS PRESS," Reading, Penna. The edition is strictly limited to 1500 numbered copies, ten of which are numbered in a separate edition and bound in red half-leather and light gray cloth. This new Polaris Fantasy Library is a project of Fantasy Press and will present outstanding classics of the field by the older masters of fantasy.

"Francis Stevens" whose real name was Gertrude Bennett was one of the best of the old-time writers of fantasy. Her work was on a par with the best writing of A. Merritt, Charles B. Stilson, J. U. Giesy, Garrett Smith, George Allan England, Victor Rousseau and others. Among her better known works are "The Citadel of Fear" and "Claimed."

"The Heads of Cerberus" originally appeared in 1919 in THE THRILL BOOK, an old Street and Smith magazine. It has been practically a legendary item. In fact, copies of this publication, which appeared before either WEIRD TALES or AMAZING STORIES were dreamed up, are so scarce that offers of $50.00 per copy will not even turn up issues!

P. Schuyler Miller, noted science fiction writer and critic calls "The Heads of Cerberus," "Perhaps the first work of fantasy to envisage the parallel-time-track concept, with a special twist . . ." The story concerns Philadelphia in the year 2118, and in addition to its very fine fantasy is a social and political satire.

Oswald Train, well-known collector and publisher says of the tale, "it is worthy of the distinction of being selected as the first of a series of fine, special editions. It has stood up very well indeed through the years." Lloyd Eshbach has written a very excellent introduction which contains hitherto unknown and unrevealed facts about the author. Don't miss this one!

Darrell C. Richardson

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